

Professional Doctorates in the Creative Arts

DDes | DFA

HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

What is a Research Proposal?

When you apply for admission to the Professional Doctorate in Design or in Fine Art, in addition to completing an application form you will need to write a research proposal. The aim of the proposal is to describe the research you wish to undertake. When reviewing your application, we will consider the quality and feasibility of your proposed research project.

What should the proposal include?

The proposal should demonstrate that there is scope to make a significant contribution to your field, and that you have the potential to make that contribution (with the support of your supervisors). You will need to identify the broad subject area of your research, and the professional context in which your questions or issues arise. You will need to describe who is interested in these questions and therefore who will benefit from research in this area. You will need to identify who else has been researching these issues, including both literature and creative artefacts and production. Finally, you will need to describe how you currently think you will go about doing the research and what methods you will use to add to academic and/or professional knowledge in the field.

Since the relationship between practice and theory is important to a professional doctorate, your proposal should indicate what role practice will play in your research. Consider whether your research will be practice-based or practice-led; whether your practice will form part of your investigation, or will be a method by which you demonstrate your findings; and whether your research will be located in a particular professional environment.

The proposal should be about 1000-2000 words in length, and should include:

- 1. Title**

The title should be short and it should describe the gist of the proposal.

- 2. Introduction/Overview**

Outline your aims for the project, and the professional field or context in which you will be researching.

- 3. Background and Rationale**

Demonstrate your knowledge and provide an integrated overview of the progress made by other scholars and practitioners on the topic of your proposal. This section should provide a conceptual framework for the reader so that your research questions and methodology can be better understood. It is a

good idea to be selective and up-to-date in presenting the literature relevant to your thesis.

You should provide a critical assessment of the existing literature on the topic from your reading so far. This means not only presenting the relevant literature accurately with reference to published sources but also comparing and contrasting different views and assessing, for example, the validity and consistency of various elements of the relevant literature.

Aim to identify a gap in the existing literature that can be filled with your own research. This may involve identifying unexplored territory, or challenging an established theory. This should lead to your research question.

4. Research Question or Issue

It would be useful if you make your research questions explicit by listing them. Think about the feasibility of answering each of them. Are there sufficient data/information to answer them? If not, can you generate sufficiently adequate primary data within the time frame of the research degree programme for which you are applying? Do the research questions signal your expected contribution to the literature and reflect the potential originality of your proposed work?

5. Methods

This section should discuss the means through which you will answer your research questions and defend your thesis. Consider what data you will need and how you will gather it. You should include information about the role that practice will play in your research, and how that practice will inform or demonstrate your research findings.

6. Bibliography

List the sources you have referenced in your proposal, and any other key sources that will inform your research.

What happens if I change my mind about the project?

You will be able to change your project after you enrol on the programme. In fact Year 1 is dedicated to revising and strengthening your proposal in the light of the supervision and study that you will undertake.

How will the proposal be assessed?

There are two main purposes to the research proposal. The first is to ensure that you have sufficient initial understanding of the field and the place of your research project in it. This includes demonstrating an initial understanding of what it means to research something. The second purpose is to ensure that the University has the resources and expertise necessary to supervise your project at an appropriate level.

What happens next?

If the research proposal is assessed as satisfactory, it will be used as a basis for the discussion of your project at an interview. All applicants are interviewed prior to admission, either in person at the University, or online using Skype, etc.

Name:	
Area of Expertise:	
Suggested entry point to the Programme:	(Sept/March)

Title

Introduction/Overview <i>(provide a general synopsis describing succinctly the topic of your proposal)</i>

Background and Rationale <i>(Discuss the starting points for this research (authors, scholars, artists and projects you consider useful and successful and others that you consider improvable)</i>

Purpose of the study <i>(Describe here why is this study important and relevant now and why is it worth studying)</i>

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Research Question or Issue (Statement of the problem(s). Describe here why the current models/projects/studies are lacking or do not work.)

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Aims and objectives (Aims are generic and broad. For example: This study aims at increasing the knowledge of... or explore the notion of... Goals are more specific and quantifiable. For example: to measure the quantity of, to test this particular method etc.)

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Methodology (Explain here how you intend to address the aims and objectives. How do you want to elaborate this study? How will you find the data to respond to your research questions?)

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Contribution to knowledge (What is this work adding to the world knowledge? Who can benefit from this work? Who will be using your findings?)

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Timeline (Describe here what will happen in each year with milestones. A chart or

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diagram can be quite helpful here)

Dissemination and publication plan *(when and what are you planning to publish your work through conferences, journal articles, round tables etc.?)*

Bibliography

More information here:

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/courses/professional-doctorate-in-design>

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/courses/professional-doctorate-in-fine-art>