

PREPARING YOUR RESEARCH OUTLINE

We expect your research outline to include the following:

1. **A clear working title for your thesis, keywords and a short introduction**
 - You are not committing to this title for your entire doctoral journey but it is a demonstration that you know what is required of a doctorate. Your introduction may end with an initial attempt at creating your problem statement.

2. **A brief literature review**
 - This should include information about the way in which your work links to the work of others in the same or related fields.
 - You should also include within this section a discussion of how your work supports or contests the work of others.
 - Remember when discussing the literature, it should be cited correctly.

3. **A clear statement about the focus of your research, why it is important and interesting**
 - This statement needs to be written in neutral terms and based on a 'gap' in research rather than a testimonial about your personal interests.
 - Within this statement you would need to include your proposed (remember this will change!) research questions/ hypothesis/propositions.
 - You need to consider, when you are writing this section, whether or not your questions can be answered within an appropriate timeframe for a doctoral project.

4. **A consideration of the methods/paradigm that you may be adopting**
 - This may include information about your proposed research site.
 - You will also explain the methods you expect to use and how they fit with a broader philosophy or worldview.

5. A timeline

- A timeline or Gant chart to demonstrate the proposed timeline for your research.

6. References

- The references should be listed in terms of the Harvard convention. References should be cited appropriately throughout your outline to demonstrate that you have read and understood the work of others. Further guidance on referencing is available in the 'Doctoral Research Resources' section of the [Student Portal](#).

An initial proposal should be about 2000 words in length. Remember it is meant to be an overview of your proposed study not an entire thesis. Being able to write succinctly is a great skill to develop.

This may look like it is stating the obvious, but you should ensure that you have refined and edited your outline several times before you submit it. There is nothing worse than receiving a research outline full of mistakes.

One last thing, your outline should be formatted as set out in the "Proposal Template" that you have access to in the 'Doctoral Research Resources' section of the [Student Portal](#).