

## HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal is an **outline** of the research project that will be the focus of your doctoral thesis. Your research proposal is the key part of your application. It allows you to present your academic perspective and your creativity in developing an innovative research project.

The programme is targeted at PhD candidates with a strong foundation in **economics, law, political science, sociology, public administration, management or related fields**.

Successful projects address **research questions** in the field of governance that are **covered by our core faculty**. Please consult the [list of potential thesis advisers](#) to identify faculty members who would be interested in your research project.

The proposal should contain **no more than 5,000 words**. A good research proposal does not necessarily achieve this number of words; it is rather the quality of your text that matters.

The following guidelines may be of assistance when writing your proposal. However, keep in mind that a research proposal should always reflect your personal academic perspective and research interest.

In a first step, present a **concrete problem** in which you are interested.

- What is the research problem?
- Why have you chosen this issue?
- Why is the chosen issue relevant for investigation?

In relation to this issue, specify your central **research question**. This question is the focus of your project and should be presented clearly.

- What is the aim/interest of your project?
- Why is your research question relevant for academic debate?
- Where is the gap in the literature that you intend to address?
- Which sub-questions or hypotheses are relevant for answering your research question?

Next, specify the **theoretical perspective** that you will use in analysing your research question.

- Why did you choose this specific theoretical perspective?
- How does the theory help to answer your question?
- What are the theory's main assumptions in this regard?

Based on your theoretical perspective, detail your **methodological approach**.

- What kind of methodology will you use and why?
- What are relevant data or other sources of information?

Furthermore, please reflect on the **content** of your planned PhD thesis.

- What will be the main arguments of the thesis?
- What might be the outcome of, or answers to, these arguments?
- How will you structure your thesis and why?

Finally, enclose a **timetable** indicating the timing of the main steps of your project including periods for research, analysis and writing.

Please note that your proposal should be properly referenced and include a **bibliography**.

Please identify 1-2 faculty members of the Hertie School of Governance as potential advisers for your research project ([see list](#)).