

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

PhD Research Proposal Guidelines

Your research proposal will provide evidence of your ability to plan and organise independent research, and the relevance of your research topic to the interests and expertise a [prospective supervisor](#) in the Institute for Employment Research (IER). It should contain not only a sound indication of empirical content, but also link to existing scholarship and provide evidence of a strong analytical underpinning.

Please read and follow the guidelines below carefully.

Proposal Format

Your proposal should be approximately 2,500 words in length and should be provided together with your timetable and references (or a short bibliography). We do not expect the proposal to be perfect at this stage, nor do we expect you to adhere to it closely as your research develops since ideas will almost certainly change once you start to study. We do, however, expect you to structure your proposal as follows, using the suggested headings in bold:

- **Title** – of your proposed research
- **Research question** – provide an overview of your research question, explaining why it is of academic and or practical importance
- **Objectives** – outline the main objectives of your research, providing details of two or three key aspects
- **Literature Review** – write a short literature review, indicating the importance of previous related research and how your own research question might address a gap in knowledge
- **Research methods:**
 - state the main research techniques (interviews, case studies, modelling, etc.) you might use
 - indicate your suggested data collection procedures, including sources, access and sample and any possible difficulties
 - explain any analytical techniques and/or any theoretical framework you intend to use
 - add your proposed timetable of activities
- **Summary** – provide a brief overview of your proposed research and how it might make a useful contribution to the field
- **References**– list the references in your proposal

Timeline

The timeline should give an indication of the timing of research activities. Please note that students often undertake a number of training modules in year 1 and prepare for their upgrade from MPhil to PhD, with fieldwork starting in year 2.

You may also wish to suggest who you would like to supervise your doctoral studies. However, the allocation of supervisors will depend upon a number of factors, and no guarantee can be given that your suggestion will be accepted.

To summarise:

- (a) you need to write to a very tight format stating what you plan to research, why and how; the **format** is clearly outlined above; and
- (b) your proposal should not only have sound indication of empirical content but a strong analytical underpinning.