SEARCHING FOR **FUNDING**?

Use our database to find your eligible sources of funding:

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgfunding](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgfunding)

WANT TO **FIND OUT MORE**?

Join us on campus for an Open Day or speak to us online:

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgvisit](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgvisit)
WHERE DO YOU START!?  
Your guide to the PhD process at Birmingham.
The research proposal is an important document that you submit as part of the application process, so it is essential that you put sufficient time and energy into preparing, as well as drafting, it.

**WHAT SHOULD THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL BE?**

**PROJECT**
Why is your project worth investing in?

**PERSON**
Why are you the best person to deliver the project?

**PLACE**
Why is the University of Birmingham the best place to undertake your research?

**PREPARATION**
How have you prepared for the project? What other training will you undertake in order to deliver the project?

**PASSION**
Does your passion for your subject and for conducting original research come through in the application?

**PRECISION**
You want the reader to get a very clear idea of what you are planning to do, why it is worthwhile, and how you plan to achieve your goals. Three years and 50,000–80,000 words for a full-time PhD can get used up alarmingly quickly; your project must be achievable!

**WHAT SHOULD YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL DEMONSTRATE?**

**ORIGINALITY**
What is the ‘gap’ in knowledge that you wish to fill?

**CONTEXT**
Situate your own research within a body of existing work.

**IMPACT**
The benefits to wider society.

**CRITICAL THINKING**
Identify issues and problems within the status quo.

**SUITABLE SUPERVISION**
Research the department and show that your project fits with the research interests of a supervisor, and/or the wider department and University.

**OWNERSHIP**
Demonstrate your ability to take ownership of an independent research project and make a positive first impression of yourself as a potential research leader.

**FEASIBILITY**
Show that the scope, timescale and resources are realistic. Reflect on the key questions that you are seeking to answer to ensure that your project is not too broad to be achievable.

**TRAINING NEEDS**
What further training will you need? How will you undertake this?

**INTEREST**
Demonstrate an interest in and passion for your research area, through specific examples.

**WHY YOU?**
Why are you the right person to undertake this research? How has your background prepared you for it?

**TWO KEY CONCEPTS THAT YOU NEED TO EXPRESS: ORIGINALITY AND IMPACT.**

Find out how to demonstrate these concepts: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/proposalwriting](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/proposalwriting)
AN EXAMPLE LAYOUT

1. A WORKING TITLE
   A clear indication of the intent of your project and the central issue that you will address.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH
   Write a short overview of your research: the key issue(s) that you wish to investigate, and why these are important. Why have you applied to the department? You can refer to the research areas and priorities of a particular research grouping or supervisor.

3. GROUND YOUR RESEARCH IN EXISTING LITERATURE
   Yours is an original piece of research, so you should demonstrate that your proposed topic, or your perspective on it, has not been studied before. Discuss major debates and issues in the field and show your familiarity with some of the main works addressing your proposed research issue.
   Make reference to the most important texts related to the research, demonstrate your understanding of the issues and identify existing gaps (both theoretical and practical) that your research intends to address.

4. METHODOLOGY AND RESOURCES
   This section should identify the information or data that you will need in order to address the central issue of your research, how you are going to access the material and the possible research methods or techniques that you will use. You should also include some reflection on potential problems that you may face in the research process (e.g., access to primary material or interview subjects).

5. TIMESCALE
   Provide a realistic time plan for completing your research degree study, either in three years if you are studying full time or six years if part time.

6. REFERENCES
   Some departments may request an indicative list of references and sources. List the main published literature that you intend to use to guide your research (with reference to the theoretical framework and the substance of the research), and any available data sources you may use.

MAKE SURE YOU’VE COVERED THE FOLLOWING...

☐ WHAT IS THE RESEARCH?
☐ WHY DO IT?
☐ WHY INVEST?
☐ SIGNIFICANCE
☐ YOUR AIMS
☐ HAVE YOU SHOWN YOUR PASSION?
☐ CONTEXT IN THE FIELD

☐ METHODOLOGY
☐ IS THERE FIELDWORK?
☐ RESOURCES REQUIRED
☐ IMPACT
☐ TIMELINE
☐ REFERENCES

THE 3 Cs

CLEAR
- Is it clearly articulated?
- Is the research problem, question or hypothesis made clear?
- Is it clear what the impact will be?
- Be as specific as you can as often as you can!

CONCISE
- Is it succinct and focused (i.e., doesn’t ramble)?
- Does it use short sentences and paragraphs that convey your ideas in a concise way?

COHERENT
- Does it flow and link together well?
- Does it tell a clear narrative of what you want to do, why, and how?