Advice on Writing Your Research Proposal When Applying for PhD in Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour

We receive a high number of applications for the PhD programme in Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour, a large proportion of which are rejected. This information below will guide you as to how to make your application more successful.

The single most important aspect of your application is your research proposal **Almost all the applications we reject are the result of an inadequate research proposal.**

1. Please do not send us a 'generic' proposal. We are not interested in receiving a proposal that you have written for admission to another university, unless it fits our research interests. Also please do not send a brief outline asking for comments. It is not the work of potential supervisors to do substantial thinking for you.

2. We like dissertations that are 'academic'. Our aim is to train researchers who are interested in a career in academia, and are interested in academic publishing. It will give you an advantage if you have published (or tried to publish) in academic journals. We encourage our PhD students to write their dissertations with a series of publishable papers in mind. If you want to do a PhD to enter into a business role, you should probably consider a DBA instead, which has a more practical aspect to it. You can find out more about the DBA here.

3. Your proposal must demonstrate that you have a good understanding of organisation and management theory and/or subjects that relate to the research interests of members of the school. This means that you should have read (and cited) various core academic contributions to the field of organisation and management studies. This also means that you will need to have a strong theoretical background. Proposals which do not have a conceptual framework are also immediately rejected.

4. The Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour unit has a strong theoretical focus. Demonstrating that you have a good grasp of conceptual and theoretical issues is fundamental to us taking your application seriously. We are expecting to see that you have read most of the core contributions to your area in organisation and management studies, and that you are familiar with the theoretical traditions of the field.

5. Examine the publications and citations of our staff, both current and past, and try and link your research proposal to our current or past research publications. At the very minimum, it will improve the reception your proposal receives if you show that you are familiar with the themes in which our staff has worked on, both presently and in the past. For instance, in the field of leadership, you should be familiar with the work of Avolio and Bass. In the area of business ethics you should be familiar with Donaldson. Likewise, it would come as a surprise to us if you are not familiar with the work of Weber, Drucker, Child or Greenwood and Suddaby.

6. **Please do not send your proposal to all members of staff in LOB indiscriminately.** Try and identify a potential supervisor by examining the published research of our staff. This will greatly enhance the possibility of your application being accepted - if your proposal fits the research interests of a specific potential supervisor. This means demonstrating a familiarity with their research. For instance, if you write a proposal on entrepreneurship and are unfamiliar with the works of Prof Andrew Godley, your proposal will likely not be considered. You may wish to send your proposal to potential supervisors for comments before submitting an application formally.

7. We are interested in seeing your ability to be analytical and critical in your analysis of the literature. This means that we are interested in students who disagree with us, as well as those who agree with our past work. We like students who extend our own work, even if it takes it in a different direction.

8. Please ensure that your proposal is well-written, and without typos. Do not waste your time with complex colour graphics. We are mainly interested in your ability to communicate well, and to write in a clear and logical way. **Please note we expect students at a minimum to have an overall IELTS of 7 in English.**

9. Always consider where you will be able to get the data for your proposed thesis. Demonstrating familiarity with publicly available data sets, and secondary data sources is always impressive. If you have access to firms, private datasets or archives that will facilitate your research, please indicate this in your proposal.

10. We take both a social/organisation theory and a management perspective. This means that your proposal should ideally have a section that provides 'managerial implications' or 'policy implications' of your proposed dissertation.

11. If there is nobody in our unit who has worked on a similar topic as your research proposal, we will probably reject your application. We have limited supervision capacity, and we only accept students who work on subjects of interest to us. You can see the full list of faculty that can review research proposals here.

12. Please note that we decide on the scholarships **after** we have decided to shortlist your proposal. This means that only the best proposals are considered for the scholarships.

Heading 1

This is an example of an important introductory paragraph and how the style 'Henley Introduction' can be used to emphasise this text.

This paragraph is set the style 'Normal'. This is a standard paragraph of running text and will form the basis of most report-like documents.

Heading 2

This is an example of an important introductory paragraph and how the style 'Henley Introduction' can be used to emphasise this text.

Heading 3

This paragraph is set the style 'Normal'. This is a standard paragraph of running text and will form the basis of most report-like documents.

An example of a list: Try not to use more than 2 levels of bullet

- Instead of using special styles to generate bullets, we now just use the 'normal', but modify it with the bullet and numbered bullet buttons in the paragraph section of the 'Home' tab
- This is another bullet on the same level
1. This is a new bullet list, using numbered bullets instead of regular ones
2. You can mix numbered and non-numbered lists
   - Like this
   - Or this.

Heading 1

You can use your page set up or layout section to add page breaks/sections etc.

You can update the 'Section name' in the header area of the page to reflect the names you give to each of your sections. For help on inserting sections and page breaks, please use the 'Help' function in Word.

Heading 2: An example of how a table should look

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Row 1	Abcd	Your text here or two or more lines	Abcd	Abcd
Row 2	Abcd	More data	Abcd	Abcd
Row 3	Abcd	Extra info	Abcd	Abcd

Henley Caption: Use this style to add a description to pictures, tables or diagrams