

GUIDELINES ON WRITING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR APPLICATION TO THE PhD AT NCAD

General

A research proposal is a project outline of around 1,200 words that you write as part of the process of applying to study for a PhD. At NCAD we use this proposal to assess the quality and originality of your ideas and whether these are informed by the existing literature and practice in the field you have chosen. It also helps us to identify a suitable supervisory team for your work. If you are invited for interview your proposal will provide the basis for discussion of your application, so it should demonstrate an understanding of the field you propose to research within, whether this be a theoretico-critical one or a specific art and design practice.

The Elements of the Proposal

- A **working title** while this will inevitably change as your research develops a title should identify the core issues you want to investigate
- A brief **overview** or synopsis of your proposed research (200 words) indicating the major issues you wish to investigate and why these are important
- Identification of a number of specific **research questions** to be addressed listed as bullet points
- A brief **review of the relevant literature** (500 words) and cognate practice indicating how your investigation will address this literature and, indeed, eventually contribute to it. You should also provide an indicative list of references and sources, including art works if appropriate
- A specification of your **research design** (200 words) indicating the methods you propose to employ in your investigation e.g. ethnography, studio painting practice, design prototyping etc. This should also identify how your research might be **documented** (written field/studio diaries, photographic record, design lab records etc)
- A **timetable** for your research indicating when any fieldwork of studio practice will take place (including identification of any travel or site visits) and when writing up will take place
- An identification of any specific **resources** needed to conduct your research whether technical, studio provision, archive and data sources etc.
- **Research Outcomes** – provide a clear description (100 words in bullet point form) of the anticipated products of your research specifying the relation between the written dissertation (up to 40,000 words usually) and the practice elements such as planned performances, exhibitions, prototypes, media products etc.