PHD RESEARCH PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

University of Warwick Institute for Employment Research

Your research proposal is an important part of your application to the PhD programme at the Institute for Employment Research (IER). The research proposal provides evidence of your ability to plan and organise a major research project that has potential to make an original contribution to knowledge. It also demonstrates your potential fit into the research expertise of the institute. If you gain entry to the department and being your study, there may be changes to the proposal, we do not expect you to adhere to this proposal closely. However, through this proposal we want to see that you are able to conceive of a doctoral research project and evaluate suitability to the program. Please note that different universities and programmes will have different expectations about the research proposal.

To be considered for admission to the Institute of Employment Research postgraduate research degree programme, your proposal should be **approximately 2,000 words** (excluding reference lists), and no longer than this.

We expect to see the following components within the proposal, and we have provided approximate word counts for each section as a guide:

- **Title** – a project title that gives a clear indication of the topic and context

- **Introduction (200-400 words)** – a concise identification of the topic and its background, context and importance. The introduction should include the basic information about the topic and context, the field or discipline of employment studies where the project sits (economics, sociology, political science, etc.), and why this project is timely, important, meaningful.

- **Literature review (approx. 750 words)** – an overview of key academic literature are relevant to your proposed project, giving a . This section should include:
    - a summary of what existing research in this area has discussed
    - an explanation of how your project contributes to the existing scholarship
    - information about your theoretical or conceptual framework
    - a short conclusion stating how the proposed study is located within and extends existing research (this forms part of the rationale or justification for the study).

- **The overarching research questions and specific objectives of the study (300-400 words).** Provide an overview of your overarching research question, explaining why it is of academic and or practical importance. The specific research questions should be directly based on your topic and should relate to the rationale for the study as identified in the literature section. The research questions should form a coherent set of questions, rather than departing in different directions. Along with stating the questions, include a short account of the questions, elaborating what they mean and what is being asked, and why.

Identify the specific research objectives of the study and how they align with your research questions.

- **Study design (approx. 750 words)** – this section should describe the research design of the study. The section should include information on how the research design and methods will help to answer the research questions. The section should include:
    - the intended research approach (include e.g., paradigm/theoretical stance/ontology/epistemology),
    - the proposed methodology (e.g. ethnography, case study, small-scale qualitative study, secondary data analysis, philosophical analysis, historical analysis, survey, action research),
    - the proposed methods (e.g. interview, observation, questionnaire, diary, or equivalent for a non-empirical study e.g. the concepts to be used for philosophical or historical analysis),
    - the participants to be included in the study (if applicable), or texts or policy documents or secondary data sources. How the participants will be sampled and recruited or the sources will be selected/accessed.
    - ethical issues you foresee in the proposed project, including related to your own positionality as a researcher – who are you in the research context?
    - plans for analysis – of course this is very early stages to propose a mode of analysis, but we are looking for some knowledge of modes of data analysis.
    - timeline– a proposed timetable of your research activities
- **Conclusion (approx. 200 words).** The proposal's conclusion should summarise how the study is intended to achieve the original contribution to knowledge, and could also include a discussion of the project's intended impact – on professional practice for instance, or policy, and on academic knowledge.
- **Word count.** Please state the proposal word count at this stage of the proposal (excluding the references / appendices).

Research proposals should be submitted alongside the motivational letter as PDF or Word documents.

The IER admissions team and potential supervisors will review your research proposal to gauge the suitability of applicants to undertake the research, the feasibility of the project, and rationale or justification for the work.

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide individualised feedback research proposals of applicants who are unsuccessful.