



## How to Apply for a Research Postgraduate Programme at Mary Immaculate College

### First Steps

Before beginning the application process, you should have an idea of a research topic (or research area) that you would like to research. Essentially, your proposal should identify a question or problem that you will seek to address in your thesis. It could be that your thesis will address the fact that something has been overlooked or misunderstood. You may want to apply a new reading or interpretation in order to challenge or extend received readings or understandings. The process of identifying a topic will require you to read around your areas of interest and to talk to others to refine your ideas.

### Identifying a Supervisor

When you have an idea of what you would like to research, you should contact a member of academic staff in the relevant department. You can explore the research interests of faculty on the department's webpages. If you are unsure as to which member of faculty's research interests best match your chosen research topic, you should contact the Head of Department. The application process cannot proceed until a member of faculty has agreed to act as supervisor for your thesis.

### The Thesis Proposal

When a supervisor has been agreed, you should consult with them while drafting your thesis proposal.

The word limit of the PhD research proposal is between 3,000 and 4,000 words and the word limit of an MA by research is up to 3,000 words. In both cases this limit includes the bibliography.

The proposal will be evaluated on the basis of overall quality, clarity, originality, evidence of familiarity with the field and literature, relevance of the topic, focus, feasibility, referencing (in accordance with either the Harvard or Chicago Style of Referencing), and style (including syntax, grammar, and spelling).

## Writing a Research Proposal

**A working title** – this is something that often changes as the research project progresses – the essential thing is that it is clear and informative.

**Aims and objectives** – be specific about precisely what you intend to look at and avoid vagaries and generalisations. Give examples, names and dates to stake out your research area.

**Motivation** – Why do you want to embark on research into this topic area? What do you hope to gain from the PhD experience, both personally and professionally? What skills and qualities do you possess that equip you to embark on this project?

**Methodology** – Essentially, what is your approach? What data-collection and analytical techniques will you use? Will you be looking at the topic through a particular theoretical lens? Will you be looking at manuscripts or listening to audio material, consulting archives or travelling abroad, using electronic resources or conducting interviews? If so, you need to outline this.

**Substantive outline of the project** (with scholarly references) – How will your thesis impose structure on your study? Will chapters be organised chronologically or thematically? If there is an element of comparison, will this take place within chapters or across them, or both? Will chapters constitute discrete discussions, or will they build progressively towards the argument?

**Originality, relevance and outcomes of the project** – How do you justify your project? What is your rationale for doing this research on this topic? Why does the research need to be done? Where does this project fit in relation to current literature and gaps in existing knowledge? Outline the possible benefits or outcomes of your research for understanding, practice and policy. Provide key supporting references as evidence.

**Ethical implications of your research (if applicable)** – For those undertaking research involving live participants (for example, research involving surveying or interviewing) there will be ethical considerations to take into account and it is important to acknowledge them in your proposal. If possible, outline the ways in which you will adhere to ethical research practices.

**Relevant bibliography** – At this stage in your planning, what have you read and what do you think you will need to read in the course of your research? Of course, this bibliography is a starting point and will grow as your research progresses.

## Academic Letters of Reference

While writing the thesis proposal, the applicant (in consultation with their supervisor) should decide on who their two academic referees will be and contact them, as hard copies of letters of reference must be included with the application. It is entirely appropriate for your proposed supervisor to act as referee.

Please note that both letters of reference must refer to the thesis topic / proposal, as well as the applicant's academic ability.

## Departmental Review of Thesis Proposal

When both applicant and supervisor have agreed that the thesis proposal is ready for submission, it should be forwarded to the Head of Department for review.

### The Application Form

The applicant should complete a research postgraduate application form, available online [here](#). The application form must cite the thesis title, although the thesis proposal will accompany the form as a separate document.

Please ensure that all necessary signatures, including those of your supervisor and the head of department on the back page of the form, are sought *before* the form is returned to the RGSO.

### The Application Package

A copy of the application package should be delivered to the Research and Graduate School Office (RGSO) in the in the Mount St Vincent building, Mary Immaculate College.

The application package should contain the following:

- Application Form (signed by Student, Supervisor and Head of Department)
- Thesis Proposal
- Two Academic Letters of Reference
- Transcripts (if you are an MIC student, you can find out how to obtain your transcripts here: <http://www.mic.ul.ie/adminservices/student services/Pages/academicawarddocs.aspx>)
- CV
- Application Fee of €33

(The fee may be paid by bank giro, cheque or bank draft, made payable to 'Mary Immaculate College'. Bank giro forms may be collected from Admissions, Room 112, 1st Floor, Main Building, tel: +353 61 204348, or they may be posted out on request by emailing [admissions@mic.ul.ie](mailto:admissions@mic.ul.ie)).

### Next steps

Upon receipt of applications, the Research & Graduate School (RGSO) will call a meeting of the Postgraduate Research Committee (PRC) to determine the outcome of the application. Following the PRC meeting, the board's decision is forwarded in a letter to the applicant's supervisor. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to convey the board's decision to the applicant. In the case of successful applicants, the Postgraduate Office notifies the Admission Office of which applications have been accepted and copies application forms to them. The Admissions Office sends a formal letter of offer to the student and invites them to come to the admissions office to register.