BU | Bournemouth University

Doctoral College

Writing your personal statement and research proposal

The aim of this guide is to help you to apply to our postgraduate research degree programmes. It is intended to help you write a personal statement and research proposal that clearly communicates the personal attributes and academic qualities you would bring to Bournemouth University.

We consider research applications based on the following factors:
- Academic qualifications, including individual marks for dissertation and research modules
- English language proficiency or intent to complete required level of English
- Strength of your research proposal
- Bournemouth University's capacity to provide you with appropriate supervision
- Evidence of access to appropriate resources to support your living costs and pay registration fees over the period of your research.

Following the advice in this guide does not guarantee acceptance onto a postgraduate research degree programme at Bournemouth University.

Personal statement

Your personal statement is an opportunity to provide us with information on your academic background, relevant experience and motivations for undertaking postgraduate research. It is a chance for you to tell us how you arrived at the decision to apply for a research programme, and what your goals are once you have completed it.

The research project you plan to undertake should be unique, and so your personal statement should explain to us why you are the right person to successfully carry out the project.

If you are an international applicant, the personal statement should also touch on your reasons for choosing to study in the UK and at Bournemouth University in particular.

You should also use this space to identify any academic staff you would like to work with on your project, especially if you have already contacted them ahead of your application.

The personal statement should also include information on any other hobbies or interests you may wish us to know when considering your application. Telling us this can show us other skills you have, such as social skills, team work or leadership.

We recommend personal statements are between 500-1000 words.

Research proposal

Your research proposal shows your potential to successfully complete your programme. The stronger it is, the more likely it will be that we will want to make you an offer.

Why is the research proposal important?

The quality of your research proposal plays a significant factor in our decision on whether to accept you onto a postgraduate research programme.

Your research proposal should articulate a clearly defined research question and outline the approach you propose to take in answering it. It should also explain the originality and significance of the contribution which your research will make to existing literature in your subject area. A good proposal will demonstrate your understanding of the project, skills in critical thinking, methodologies, and theoretical context. It will show your project is viable, and you should think carefully about how you will complete it within

the relevant timeframe of your programme. The proposal should also display a high level of communication skills suitable for an academic environment.

If you have specific supervisors you would like to work with at Bournemouth University, you should also make this clear in the research proposal and ensure you reference their work throughout.

What should the research proposal include?

For non-defined research projects (e.g. Self-funded or Sponsored) research proposals should be approximately 1,500 words and include the following:

- The title of the proposed research
- An overview of the current research context in the form of a short literature review of key articles and books
- A set of research questions you will be seeking to answer, explaining why each question is important
- A statement of methodology and your understanding of the methods that will be used
- A time scale for the project, in the form of a time table or Gantt chart

- Explanation of the potential or expected significance and impact of your project – who or which areas of society may benefit from your work
- A bibliography of the key articles and books mentioned in your proposal.

For defined projects such as funded PhD, MPhil or MRes Studentships, instead of a research proposal please provide a synopsis of not more than 1,500 words which demonstrates:

- Your understanding of the defined project
- The approach you would take
- What qualities you would bring to the research community

Your research proposal is an academic document and as such should be:

- Fully checked for spelling and grammar errors
- Referenced accurately and in an appropriate style
- Clearly structured and signposted with headings

It is expected that all research proposals are your own work and as such will be run through our Turnitin system in line with our plagiarism policy.

If you have any further questions regarding the research proposal or admissions for postgraduate research degree programmes, you can contact us by emailing PGRadmissions@bournemouth.ac.uk