



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Writing a Research Proposal for you PhD Application

Trinity Business School
2024 - 2025



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Introduction:

Thank you for your interest in the doctoral programme here at Trinity Business School. Trinity College Dublin is one of the oldest and best-known universities in Europe. As the oldest university in Ireland, dating from 1592, Trinity has upheld a reputation of tradition and quality in education since that time. The QS World University Ranking 2025 rank Trinity College 1st in Ireland and 87th in the world.

The doctoral programme at Trinity Business School focuses on educating and training outstanding individuals for careers in academic employment in leading international business schools. Our programme attracts students with diverse backgrounds from around the world. Selection is highly competitive. While successful candidates have excellent academic backgrounds, we also prioritise student's fit to both the programme and the research interests of our academic faculty.

Our philosophy and structure mean that you will be part of a small incoming class, but you will also be part of a broader cohort of students who stimulate and support their fellow students. Building on Trinity's 400-year tradition of personalized, tutorial style learning, we will get to know each of you personally and help inform your academic and personal development and confidence throughout the programme. You will gain from a close, one-to-one relationship with our faculty, the opportunity to identify and resolve the individual challenges you face and a chance to discover the natural talents you possess.

We will provide you with teaching, supervision, and exceptional resources to support your doctoral studies. We also have an excellent academic environment with research seminar programmes and regular international academic visitors. Trinity Business School regularly hosts major international conferences and workshops. For example, the 2023 EURAM meeting, attracted over 2000 delegates.

Working closely with your academic supervisor, you will focus on a specific research project to produce a thesis that represents a significant contribution to knowledge. Our faculty are global leaders in their respective field. Illustratively, colleagues regularly publish in leading peer reviewed journals, including *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, *Nature and Personnel Psychology*. They also hold editorial roles and editorial board memberships at many leading global journals. The opportunity to apply for a PhD at Trinity Business School is contingent on the availability of supervisors. Therefore, before you submit your application please reach out to our faculty and ensure that your application is supported by a faculty member of staff at Trinity Business School.

This document will provide you with further guidance to support your application for the programme.

Professor David Collings
Director of PhD Programme



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Preparing your application:

Your application will form a key element of our selection process. You will also normally be expected to undertake an interview. The formal application should be made through LINK, however this guide will help you ensure you provide us with all of the information we require to evaluate your application. We require a research proposal in addition to the educational, and other formal documentation as part of your application package. Please attach your proposal as a word document or pdf file as part of your online application.

How to structure your research proposal.

The first section of the research proposal should be a personal statement. This personal statement is your opportunity to tell us why you want to do a PhD, including your professional goals, why you want to do it at Trinity Business School, and how your background (educationally and professionally) have prepared you for being a doctoral student. Please ensure this section is no longer than 500 words.

You can find some advice on writing a personal statement below

<https://www.findaphd.com/guides/phd-personal-statement>

The rest of the application should be structured as follows and should be no more than 2500 words (excluding references). You should write this for an academic audience. We expect professional presentation and appropriate referencing. You should discuss a draft of the proposal with your potential supervisor before formally applying.

Motivation and research question (500-750 words).

What is the question you plan to answer through your research and why is it important? This is a very important section as it will help convince a reader that the research you plan to undertake is important. We strongly encourage you to look beyond “gaps in the literature” and to focus on a tension in extant research or theory which is important to explore. However, it is also important to think about where you position your question. Although this would be explored in greater depth in the following section you could signpost key theories that you think might inform your research.

Positioning your research in the literature (1000 – 1250 words)

What literature do you expect to draw on in undertaking your research? What are the key constructs that you will use and how do you define them? What theories are likely to be relevant to your research? Of course, we do not expect a fully developed literature review but some indication that you have done some preliminary work to think about how you might go about theorising around the research question you are asking.



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Proposed methodology (500-750 words)

How would you design a study to answer the questions you set out? What methodology might be appropriate? What sort of sample would you ideally target? Again, the expectation is not that you have finalised a study design but rather that you show some understanding of the options available in terms of designing an appropriate study. For example, would a qualitative or quantitative methodology be most appropriate for your question and why? Based on the theories you propose are there established measures that may be used for the survey? What do you think the challenges may be in data collection? Are there any ethical issues to consider?

References

Include full references for all sources cited in your proposal. These do not count in the word count.