



Sample Research Proposal Outline

The outline provides some guidance as to what is being looked for in a research proposal at the stage of applying to the research programme for MTh, MPhil, or PhD at London School of Theology. We do not regard this pattern as rigid, but the following indicates the key things you need to include. The whole proposal should not be more than **four pages, plus a one-page bibliography** – we are not looking for you to write the thesis now!

Please note that this proposal asks for your thinking *at this initial stage*. The nature of research is that the project is likely to develop as you do the research, and so we shall not expect this proposal to be final or unchangeable.

1. Topic, central focus and rationale

What is the key topic you wish to investigate in your research - the central question/hypothesis/ proposal you wish to address? Sketch this in a few sentences, indicating why it is a worthwhile question to pursue, or why this topic should be studied.

2. Context of the work

In one paragraph, briefly sketch the context of and any discussion on your proposed topic. If possible, include your key scholarly dialogue partners, and list key works in your bibliography. What has scholarship done and not done on your topic?

In one further paragraph, briefly locate your proposed research topic/thesis within the wider field of study with which you will be engaging, e.g. Systematic Theology, Old/New Testament, Hermeneutics, Historical Theology, Patristics, Reformation Studies, Practical Theology, Islamics, Christian-Muslim relations, Global Theology, Ecclesiology.

3. Statement of the problem

4. Additional research questions

Ensure that you identify your key specific research question/proposal/hypothesis from any secondary research questions (4-5) which arise from your central focus. In other words, break down your central question or issue into specific, focused questions which may form the basis for research and might lead to chapters or sections of your thesis.

5. Research method or approach to the study

What will be the key method you will use to address your topic and research questions? Why is this method the most appropriate one for your research?

For example, will your focus be reading texts or empirical research? Is your focus historical, sociological, literary, rhetorical, doctrinal, etc.?

6. Outline

Provide a first sketch of how the thesis might look; as your research develops, this will (of course) change – what is being looked for here is that you have thought through how you might transform your initial ideas into a thesis.

One good way to do this is to provide chapter headings, and under each chapter provide a sentence or two (or bullet points) indicating what you think the chapter will include.

No detailed outline is desired at this stage.

7. Outcome(s) and contribution

Write a sentence beginning 'By the end of this project I would hope to have accomplished / achieved the following...' to explain what outcome(s) you are hoping for from your research.

In one paragraph, sketch the contribution you hope your work will make to the specific topic and the relevant wider field of study.

8. Initial bibliography

Please list no more than one page of key bibliography which you will need to engage with to pursue your research, giving the usual full bibliographical information for each item. Check that this bibliography corresponds to what you have written in the main text of your proposal.