The Research Proposal – Brunel Business School (PhD without Residence)
The application process for entry onto the PhD programme within Brunel Business School requires applicants to provide a research proposal of approximately 1500 words in length. This is an attempt to ensure an appropriate assessment for the "**degree of fit**" between the applicant's research interests and the current research activities taking place within the School. The research proposal will help the applicant to provide structure for their research ideas and outline the area and objectives for the research. It will also demonstrate that the research is possible, necessary and timely and that the applicant has appropriate skills to carry out their intended study. To enable us to make a comprehensive judgement of your proposal it should contain the following:

TITLE
Should provide the reader with the main area of research. The title needs to be reasonable and not exaggerated.

INTRODUCTION
The introduction should provide a general statement of the research area and issues of interest to the applicant. This has to be based on the current literature and not about personal observations. A PhD study is about contribution to knowledge, so the introduction should provide the main building blocks of the research area and also it is an opportunity to set the boundaries (i.e. what this research is not about). You will need to concentrate on the theoretical concepts rather than contexts from day-to-day practices. You should be as precise as possible and mainly dependent the literature with a vision of how your research would fit in the literature (not what you think it should be). Make sure you link to existing research in the school by visiting the research website of the Business School.

You need to conclude this section by identifying the need for the research and your intended aim justified by the literature and presented in the introduction.

Linkages to existing literature
Briefly identify the relationship between the literature and your proposed research. In this section you need to identify which articles have attempted to tackle your research aim/questions and identify the missing aspects in the literature that they still require further research that you are intending to do here. The literature has to be up to date and from reputable journals (avoid free internet sources).

♦ *Discuss the importance of your research interest. Is it something that is absent from the current literature or something that needs further development?*

You need to draw attention to the importance of your research from a theoretical point of view based in the stated gaps in the literature. Avoid indicating what you want because it is a good idea; make sure it arises from the literature. The gap identification should come out of the literature discussion.

Methodology
This section should present very clearly the methodological approach of your research and the methods that would be followed. You are advised to consult similar articles to see how they have tackled similar problems. You should avoid choosing a methodology that you are comfortable with, it has to be relevant and justified by existing literature.

The methodology will almost invariably change during the course of the PhD, however, you are required to propose your research approach and methodology to assess your ability to select a relevant methodology based on your research aim. At this stage you should discuss issues such as whether you will follow theoretical and/or primary/empirical research; and whether it is about developing a framework or a model of work. This is an addition to a sense of whether this is a qualitative research or quantitative. You should note that all of these arguments have to be justified by the literature. If you are planning to conduct empirical or primary research you need to identify target areas that you may have access to.

References

At all circumstances your research gap, aim, and methodology should be completely informed, supported, and justified by the literature. So the literature plays a very import in developing your proposal. Hence, you need to have a good set of references (preferably from journal articles and some books and conferences if you cannot avoid). Open sources of information such as websites and wikis are discouraged as sources of good literature. You need to follow well-established standard citation styles (Harvard style is the most famous but it is not compulsory).

TIPS
- Make sure you visit the school website to review research interests of staff.
- Use facts and avoid using personal arguments.
- Focus on theoretical concepts and avoid empirical contexts as the bases of you research (contexts examples: regional areas and countries; application areas) – you may only use such contexts if it is absolutely supported by the literature.
- Make sure you contact the administration before you submit your proposal.
- Make sure you adhere to submission deadlines and do not leave it too late.
- Make sure you produce a professional document and spend time on producing it.
- Avoid using lists.
- Do rehash an existing proposal or previous studies. This will be quickly rejected.