# TEMPLATE FOR PHD/MPHIL PROPOSALS

This template should be used for all PhD and MPhil proposals submitted to the Law School.

Your proposal should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words.

A preliminary bibliography should be annexed to your proposal.

1. **Provisional title:**

The title should be clear and give an indication of the main focus of your research.

1. **The research question:**

Your proposal should clearly set out the question that your research aims to answer.

1. **Rationale for the proposed research and literature review:**

Your proposal must explain why your research is important (e.g. debate(s) and context(s) in which the topic is located) and how it will contribute to the existing scholarship in the field. There must be evidence of originality.

Your proposal must include a brief literature review; it must:

* Show that you are familiar with the key issues and instruments of relevance to the topic;
* Explain to what extent the topic has already been researched;
* Identify gaps and limitations in the literature cited in the bibliography annexed to your proposal; and
* Provide a basis to demonstrate that your research is original.

1. **Key issues:**

Your proposal must identify the more specific questions that you will need to address to answer the overarching research question. Your proposal must also identify the areas of law that will be explored.

1. **Methodology and methods**

The methodology is the approach that you intend to adopt to answer your research question. For example, the research may be doctrinal, theoretical, empirical, socio-legal, comparative or interdisciplinary.

It is vital that your choice of methodology is informed by your research question. You must explain why the chosen methodology will enable you to address your research question. Your choice of method(s) must be informed by your methodology (e.g. library-based research for doctrinal and theoretical PhDs; and qualitative and/or quantitative research methods for empirical PhDs).

Note that methodologies and methods may be combined (e.g. socio-legal research with an empirical element; empirical comparative research).

Where the proposed research is doctrinal, this section may be quite brief. However, you still need to provide a rationale for your choice of methodology and method(s). You must explain how you will access and analyse the instruments (e.g. judicial decisions; statutes; policy documents) of relevance to your PhD topic.

Where research proposals advocate the use of other types of methodology, this section must be more substantial.

The proposal must provide a theoretical framework. You must explain and justify the conceptual underpinnings of your research (e.g. why are you using particular theorists? Why are you using a particular theory?)

If you are planning to undertake empirical research, you must:

* Explain how you will negotiate access and identify any difficulties in gaining access;
* Explain and describe your methods;
* Explain your techniques of data analysis

If you intend to carry out comparative legal research, make sure to identify and address any issues of access to and use instruments from foreign jurisdictions (e.g. access to relevant databases; language barriers).

1. **Ethics:**

The proposal must identify any potential ethical issues and explain how you will address them. Note that research that involves human subjects (e.g. interviews with vulnerable persons) must receive ethical approval from the University before it can go ahead.

1. **Provisional timetable:**

The proposal must include a realistic timetable for the research to be conducted over a period of three years for a PhD or one-two years for an MPhil.

1. **Potential supervisor(s)** (optional)

If you have identified potential supervisor(s), please state their names in your proposal.