

Research Proposal Guidelines for MPhil / PhD Applicants to Edinburgh College of Art

When applying for MPhil/PhD study at the Edinburgh College of Art, all applicants are required to submit a proposal of approximately 1,000-2,000 words, outlining the nature of the work they intend to undertake towards their degree.

The College has a wide conception of what constitutes a research degree. For example, we have PhD/MPhil candidates researching conventional subjects, from architecture and urban planning to contemporary art theory. These use various methods but usually result in text-only submissions. We also have candidates working in creative, or practice-based research areas who are making - for example - films, sculptures and architectural projects. Their submissions will be both text- and object-based. However, common to all degrees are:

- (i) a set of research aims
- (ii) a research process and
- (iii) a research product.

The proposal is encouraged to include reference to all of these elements, and this should certainly be clear by the end of the first six months of full-time study (or equivalent for other modes).

Research Question

The proposal should include a statement of the initial research aims and objectives. These may evolve and change radically through the research process, but the proposal should be able to identify the particular research question(s) prompting the proposal, with a short statement concerning its significance.

Research Context

The proposal should include a brief outline of the intellectual, academic, artistic context of the research question – including a short bibliography of relevant scholarly literature – including the key debates in the field that are of relevance to the proposed research.

Research Process

This is a documented process of investigation / exploration which can be evaluated in terms of the method(s) used and the researcher's ability to contribute to the discipline, and to reflect on the value and nature of this contribution. The proposal should contain reference to the process and methods envisaged, with an indication of why these are felt to be appropriate. It is recognised that through the research process the initial methods may be revised, and that the proposal is a preliminary statement.

Research Product

This is the result of the research, namely, presentation of a previously agreed and recognisable outcome (findings/results) that can be examined and peer-reviewed through some form of in-situ event. The proposal should indicate the nature of the outcome, whether, for example, it will be a thesis, or a body of creative work, or a combination of the two. In the case of practice-based research, applicants are advised to give an indication of the kind of creative work they intend to undertake, and how it will engage with and further the research aims and process. It is acknowledged that at the stage of the proposal this only constitutes a declaration of intent, and may alter during the course of the research.

Please include a bibliography of relevant references.

Frequently applicants are asked to refine their initial proposal and they will be contacted by the College with specific indications of information required. Where potential applicants feel they are in need of further advice or wish to discuss their proposal in advance of making an application, we encourage them to do so and to contact the College at grs@eca.ac.uk.