

Guidance notes for Dance research degrees

These informal guidelines are intended to help you write a proposal to study for a research degree in Dance. The purpose of your research proposal is to help us to evaluate your application and to help you to make a coherent case for undertaking research. It is the central document against which your application will be assessed, so it is important that you follow these guidelines carefully.

In brief, what we are looking for in your proposal is evidence that:

- that it is an original contribution to knowledge;
- that you are familiar and have an understanding of existing work/literature in the subject area;
- that you have a clear position in relation to this existing work.

Your proposal should convey your enthusiasm for the topic and your confidence in your ability to complete it.

Structure and content of the proposal

The research proposal should be about 2000 words long (including bibliography) and include the following:

1. Working title

Your proposal should begin with a working title. Choosing a title is a good way of deciding what the focus of your project will be. It will probably not remain as your title throughout the project, but it will give both you and us an idea of what you want to explore.

2. Short introduction, which must include a clear thesis statement and/or research question(s)

You should provide a description of what it is you want to research, and identify and briefly discuss up to three research questions that will guide your project, at least in its early stages. (These may change as you get into your research and find that the original questions have been answered or need to be refined.)

3. Review of existing literature in the field and identification of existing gaps in knowledge

You should explain how your proposed research project relates to existing work in this field. This could take the form of a literature review and/or of a review of relevant artistic practices in the field. If you have not yet researched this question, then you are probably not yet ready to submit a proposal to us, and you should make it your first task to undertake some preliminary reading (or other relevant initial research), in order to be able to discuss this.

4. Your methodology and theoretical perspective: identify how this approach will bridge the existing gaps in knowledge.

You should discuss the methodology that will govern your research; what kind of approach you will take to this subject, and why and the research methods that this will entail (which might be library or archival research, participant observation, questionnaires, or certain types of practice, for example). If your proposal is for a project that will involve a substantial practice component, you should explain how you envisage this practice will embody or exemplify research.

If the project builds on a particular body of knowledge or creative practice, or relates to a specific theoretical framework, this should be discussed in outline. If it is an interdisciplinary project, you should explain how you propose to draw on the disciplines involved, and how these will relate to each other.

5. Detailed research plan

You should draw up a detailed research plan to outline how your research will be structured over the three years (full-time) or six years (part-time) of your degree. It is important that your plan is as specific and realistic as possible.

6. Working bibliography

You should include a bibliography or other list of sources or references. These should be cited in your discussion for points 4 and 5 above. You may wish to follow this with a further 'indicative' list that you would propose to reference once started on the project.

Your research proposal should be clearly written and presented. All references should be presented in accordance with the Harvard academic style.