

Preparing your research outline

As part of the application process you are asked to present an outline of your proposed research project. The purpose of these notes is to give you some guidance as you prepare your outline

The research outline

The purpose of the research outline is twofold. Firstly it will enable the university to assess whether your proposed area of research will be suitable for Masters by Research level study to which you are applying. Secondly it will enable the university to be sure that it can provide appropriate supervisory support to help you to complete your research.

At the same time the research outline will not be a fully worked-out proposal. The purpose of the first year of your programme and the mandatory taught module (RSDP4001) is to help you to refine your ideas for research and to think about how you will develop your competencies to undertake that research.

Format for the research outline

The research outline will be a written document of between 3 and 5 pages (A4), and 900-1500 words in length, and should be written in an appropriate academic style.

It should address the following key areas:

The research area and research question:

This section should identify what you want to research with specific reference to the research question, or questions, you will address. You should seek to be as clear and as specific as possible in stating your research problem.

Significant prior research

You are not expected to have completed a full literature review but you should identify major research and important theoretical contributions, themes or issues in the area. You should also reference key authors who have informed your current thinking or who have contributed to the understanding of the topic.

The importance of the research for theory and/or practice

This section addresses the question of whether the research is worth doing. Accordingly, you should indicate concisely why there is a need for the research either from an academic perspective or a professional/practice perspective.

Your interest in the topic

This section should briefly outline your motivation and interest in undertaking research in the area selected.

Possible research approach or research methodology

This section relates to how you propose to approach the research. It is important to provide an indication of the intended methodology. For example, will a qualitative or quantitative methodology be appropriate? Will data be obtained using questionnaires, interviews, simulations, or will you use existing data?

Ethical Issues

Are there likely to be any ethical issues associated with your research? If so, how will you address these?

Any other relevant information

Finally you should provide any other information you consider relevant to support your application relating to the research area.