

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
MCGILL UNIVERSITY**

PhD RESEARCH PROPOSAL

GUIDELINES

The “PhD Research Proposal” is a crucial part of the application process for the Joint PhD Program. These guidelines aim to assist in providing a framework for writing your submission for the School of Social Work at McGill University.

A “PhD Research Proposal” should be clear and concisely written and be no longer than 2 single-spaced pages (12-point font, with 1 inch margins). The proposed program of study should include the following key components: i) research question; ii) a statement of the research problem, iii) brief literature review; iv) the theoretical framework informing your work; v) detailed methodology (linked to your research question); vi) identified relevance to social work practice, policy and research; and vii) identification of potential supervisor(s) from among the School faculty members. In addition to the two pages, you should include a one-page bibliography of the key articles and texts that you have cited. Please do not include references that have not been used in your narrative.

Below are further details of each section:

(i) Research Question(s)

Identify your key research question(s)

(ii) Statement of the Problem

This should take the form of a brief and concise overview of the general area of study, why this area is important to study (gaps in knowledge, practice-based relevance) and potential benefits of undertaking this research.

(iii) Identification of the Relevant Literature

In this section, you should develop your proposal to demonstrate that you are aware of the key debates and issues raised in relevant bodies of literature. References to key articles and texts should be made to show that you appreciate their relevance to your research area. A PhD is an original piece of research and so you should demonstrate how your proposed area has not been studied before (identify gaps in relation to your research area).

(iv) Identification of the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical/conceptual framework or key concepts that you intend to draw upon in your work should be identified, explained and justified. Why did you choose this perspective? How is it relevant and important to your research?

(v) Methodology

In this section, it will be important to demonstrate an awareness of the methodological tools available to you and show some understanding of which would be suitable for your research and why this approach would be the best for you. Reference to the relevant literature is

necessary. In addition to explaining your method, it is important to highlight the timeframe and phases necessary for your research. Here, you should demonstrate an awareness of the need for planning and timeframe of the proposed project.

(vi) Relevance and Implications for Social Work and/or Related Discipline

In this section, you should address the implications of your work for theory, practice, policy and/or research.

(vii) Potential supervisor(s)

Identify which professors at the school could potentially supervise your topic and indicate why.

In addition to what is addressed above, in making an application, make sure that the area of specialization that you wish to study is covered by a member(s) of Faculty at the School. You can do this by checking our website (Faculty Interests page) and by reading some of the articles produced by our Faculty. You are encouraged to engage in a discussion (via email, telephone or in person) with the member of Faculty with whom you wish to work, well in advance of the application deadline. The proposed program of research is a useful way of guiding the discussion about potential supervision with a Faculty member and to inform the individual about your research interests and writing capacity.