

MSt. in Advanced Subject Teaching: English and History

Guidance for applicants on writing a research proposal

Your research proposal should be approximately 1,000 words and no longer than 1,500 words. It needs to provide those assessing your application with a clear impression of the strengths and potential contribution to knowledge of your intended research. Your proposal should be written in a clear and jargon-free style. It should include appropriate subheadings, a reference list and be free of grammatical and typographical errors. Your proposal should cover the following areas:

1. The topic that you propose to research

This should consist of a clear outline of the research question or questions and an analytical justification of the choice of topic on academic and educational grounds. You should aim to ensure that your topic falls within the remit of the MSt. in Advanced Subject Teaching and has a focus on English or history as *both* an academic discipline and a school subject. You should note that proposals for research focusing on an academic area of English or history, those lacking any school subject focus, may not be accepted. Similarly, research proposals which focus on curriculum and pedagogical theory which are not grounded in the particular disciplines of English or history may also not be accepted.

The following list contains the kinds of research project which are likely to be accepted. The list is not exhaustive, but you are advised to contact the Course Director if your proposal differs significantly from the following suggestions.

- (1) classroom-based research that explores how a particular topic of English or history might be taught to pupils;
- (2) an evaluation of a particular subject-specific teaching methodology or pedagogical approach;
- (3) a work of curriculum theory that explores the ways in which knowledge of English or history might be structured;
- (4) a study of assessment and assessment models in English or history;
- (5) a study of how pupils learn English or history in secondary schools or colleges;
- (6) an evaluation of current provision for the teaching of English or history in secondary schools or colleges;
- (7) a study of the relationship between English and history, or between English or history and other academic disciplines, either from the position of curriculum, pedagogy or assessment;
- (8) a philosophical consideration of the relationship between the academic discipline and the school subject;
- (9) a consideration of primary and secondary literature in the area of English, or a survey of the source material and literature in an area of history, accompanied by a consideration of how this might be approached in the classroom.

You might also wish to note that it is an important aim of the MSt. that students focus on areas of the curriculum that are currently under-represented in schools or colleges.

2. The research context

This is a chance to show your understanding of the background against which your research will be defined. Try to relate your proposed research to other work in its field or related fields, and indicate in what ways your research will differ. For the MSt. (which has a dual focus on subject-specific academic matters and pedagogical research) you might mention monographs on the subject area (e.g. Blake, or Cromwell's Protectorate), as well as examples of contemporary educational research relevant to your proposed project. It will be helpful to familiarise yourself with the key subject-specific education journals in order to locate such material. You should also try to give a sense of the school or college context in which you work, suggesting ways in which this context and your role within it has shaped your proposed research project.

3. The methodology and methods to be used in your study

It is likely that in most cases the research questions and methodology will be refined and adapted during the taught elements of the MSt., in year one and at the beginning of year 2, and in discussion with your course tutors and dissertation supervisor. Your research proposal might nevertheless suggest some of the methods you propose to employ, as well as a justification for the suitability of these methods in addressing your research question.

4. The contribution that your work will make to the field

It is vital that you show that your research makes a contribution to knowledge - it is not enough that it happens to interest you. Your proposal should aim to show how you have arrived at your position and recognised the need for your research. You should indicate the wider areas and debates your research will have an impact on and, if appropriate, what methodological example it sets. In short, you should demonstrate how it will contribute to knowledge and to the practice of our subject. For example, you may give examples of the sort of evidence you might consider and of the questions such evidence might help you to address, or show that you are already thinking about the area in detail and not only in outline.

The quality of the proposal is a very important factor in deciding whether or not to offer a place on the MSt. to an applicant. The identification and allocation of supervisors is undertaken by the Institute of Continuing Education as part of the admissions process.