

## LONDON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

# Sample research proposal outline

This outline provides some guidance as to what is being looked for in a research proposal at the stage of applying to the research programme for MTh, MPhil or PhD at London School of Theology. We do not regard this pattern as rigid, but the following indicates the key things you need to include. The whole proposal should not be more than four pages, including the one-page bibliography—we're not looking for you to write the thesis now!

Please note that this proposal is asking for your thinking *at this initial stage*. The nature of research is that the project is likely to develop as you do the research (if you knew it all in advance, it wouldn't be research!), and so we shall not expect this proposal to be final or unchangeable.

### Central focus

- what is the topic you wish to investigate in your research? What is the central question or thesis you wish to address? Sketch this in a few sentences, indicating why it is a worthwhile question to pursue.

### Context of the work

- briefly (one paragraph) sketch the context of previous study and discussion on your topic, including stating who will be your key scholarly dialogue partners (and list their key works in your bibliography)
- briefly (in one further paragraph) locate it within the wider field of study with which you will be engaging (e.g. systematic theology, Old/New Testament, historical theology, patristics, reformation studies, ethics, practical theology, Islamics, Christian-Muslim relations, missiology, mission history, etc.)

### Key research questions

- list the key specific research questions (about 4 to 6) which arise from your central focus—in other words, break down your central question or issue into specific, focused questions which may form the basis for your research and might lead to chapters or sections of your thesis

### Research methods

- what will be the key method(s) you will use to address your topic and research questions? Why is/are these the most appropriate method(s) for your topic and questions?
- for example, will your focus be reading texts or empirical research? is your focus historical, sociological, literary, rhetorical, doctrinal, etc.?

### Outline

- provide a first sketch of how the thesis might look; as your research develops, this will (of course) change—what is being looked for here is that you have thought through how you might transform your initial ideas into a thesis
- a good way to do this is to provide chapter headings, and under each chapter provide a sentence or two (or bullet points) indicating what you think the chapter will include

### Outcome(s) and contribution

- write a sentence beginning 'By the end of this project I would expect to have achieved/accomplished the following...' to explain what outcome(s) you are hoping for from your research.
- in one paragraph, sketch the contribution you hope your work will make to the specific topic and the relevant wider field of study

### Initial bibliography

- please list no more than one page of key bibliography which you will need to engage with to pursue your research, giving the usual full bibliographical information for each item