Proposal template for PhD applicants

	Name & project title
Rationale	A short paragraph describing the topic in more detail, and stating why it is important and *relevant to current academic debates* (this is important even if your project is more policy-focused). If you are applying for research funding, your project rationale should also link to the strategic priorities of the funding body.
Research questions	Two or three specific questions you will answer, no more (these questions should not be able to be answered with a 'yes' or 'no').
Literature review	A summary of existing research in the area, identifying the gaps your project will fill. This is very important – you need to be proposing a project which is fresh and original rather than repeating previous studies. You will probably be looking at several areas of literature – some providing general context and some relating to particular issues - so it is useful to summarise each in turn and say something about how they relate together.
Theoretical framework	The conceptual underpinnings of your thesis – for instance, you might be focusing on gender as a key category of analysis and you might also be looking at particular concepts such as intersectionality, agency, capability or others. You might also be using particular theorists, so you need to mention them here. You should also say something about how you will operationalise these theories and concepts – how can you measure or identify agency, for example? How can you put intersectionality into practice in collecting, analysing and interpreting your data?
N.B. for some proposals the literature review and theoretical framework sections may be merged into one longer section or two thematic sections, for instance in a project which is primarily theoretically oriented or which is a large empirical study.	
Methodology	A description of what you are going to do in very precise terms: • Your broad methodological approach (and epistemological framework if appropriate) • What sources of data you will use and how you will sample them • How you will negotiate access • Your methods • Your techniques of data analysis This should be the longest section. You should show here that you are conversant with the methodological literature and that you have thought through your study in detail. Of course, your methodology will evolve during the course of your project and it is always possible to change it – but it is useful to start out from a strong basis.
Ethics	If you are doing any research on human subjects you will undergo a rigorous ethics process during at the end of your first year, so it is helpful to do some reading on research ethics now and identify any potential issues and how you will address them in this section of the proposal.
Timeline	A description of how you will break your research into manageable tasks and deadlines in order to get your PhD finished within the time you have. It is best to present this in the form of a table, specifying particular dates by which you will have completed particular tasks. Again, this timeline may change but it is useful to have done some planning in advance.