Writing a Research Proposal for the PhD in Development Studies/Public Policy

For your online application you are required to submit an initial proposal **max. 5 pages** (excl. references). Proposal exceeding the maximum length will not be considered during the review process. All proposals will be checked for plagiarism. Please make sure that your proposal fits within one of the research areas of the SA-GER CDR:

- Poverty and inequality
- Rural and urban livelihoods
- Food security
- Governance in Africa, at different levels
- Social movements
- Citizenship and democracy
- Capabilities and human development
- Different social policy applications

While we do not insist on a particular format, we encourage applicants to keep the following aspects in mind:

- The proposal should begin by **explaining the subject area** in which the research is to be located, and providing an indication of the key theoretical, policy or empirical debates it plans to address.

- The proposal should then present a **brief initial review of the literature** you plan to contribute to in conducting your own research. You should demonstrate a familiarity with the relevant academic literature and theories relating to your research proposal and an awareness of the major lines of argument that have been developed in your chosen research field.

- You should then discuss the **research questions you plan to address**. Importantly, you need to demonstrate the manner in which your research questions emanate from: gaps in the existing theoretical or empirical literature; from the application of a particular theory in a specific context it has not been applied before; or from a synthesis of a number of bodies of literature, for example. **It is important to remember that the principal criterion for the award of a PhD is that the submission constitutes an original contribution to knowledge.** Having established the field of inquiry and what is ‘known’ about your topic already, you need to demonstrate how your thesis will add something original and significant to the field.

- If your PhD-theses includes an empirical part, it is desirable to give some **(preliminary) indication of the empirical research methods** relating to data collection and data analysis that will be used to conduct the research.

It is natural for ideas to evolve and change, so you will not be obliged to adhere to the specifics of your proposal if you are offered a place on the program. However, the proposal is the foundation of your working relationship with your supervisor and thus it cannot be radically altered without discussion and consultation with your supervisor.