Research proposal for external and contract PhD candidates

The main purposes of a PhD research proposal are (1) for the candidate, to propose an original research idea, to demonstrate knowledge of the state of art in the relevant academic field and to show the contribution of the proposed research to this body of knowledge; (2) for the prospective supervisor and the board of admissions, to ascertain the originality and general feasibility of the research, the candidate’s analytic, synthetic and academic writing skills.

The proposal should follow the structure outlined below and be no longer than 5 pages (excluding bibliography).

1. **Name of the candidate**

2. **Working Title**

3. **Abstract**
   (summary of the research proposal in no more than 300 words)

4. **Introduction**
   (describing the scope of research and identifying a major issue, problem, or gap in knowledge):

5. **Main Research Question and Sub-questions**
   (formulating a question, or cluster of interrelated questions, which invite an original piece of research);

6. **State of Art**
   (identifying existing academic literature on the subject of research, and embedding the research proposal in the current state of knowledge)

7. **Methodology**
   (setting out the approach and methods that will be used, and explaining how these will help to answer the research question(s))

8. **Timescale and feasibility**
   (a breakdown of the research project in sections and a realistic planning that fits the professional situation of the candidate)

9. **References cited and indicative bibliography**
   (Does not count towards the page limit)

10. **Additional information**
    (for instance, if you have established contacts with organisations which may assist you in accessing research materials, or if you have previously researched the topic, then it is appropriate to provide evidence to that effect here)