

## **Guide to the Personal Statement (AHRC and Departmental Awards): PhD Students**

If you have not yet made contact with a prospective supervisor, please do so ASAP. You will need to work in concert with your prospective supervisor on your personal statement. Our staff web pages

<http://www.soton.ac.uk/music/staff/Personal/index.html#academic>

will give you an idea of our research interests. If you are unsure whom to approach, please contact Dr Thomas Irvine ([tairvine@soton.ac.uk](mailto:tairvine@soton.ac.uk)), the PGR coordinator.

### *A Note for Composers*

The following guidelines were originally written for more typical kinds of humanist research. But you can profit from them by thinking as concretely as you can of your proposed portfolio as a complete piece of 'research.' You might think about substituting 'range of music I want to compose' for 'scope of research project' and considering things like 'sources' and 'research methods' to be 'technique(s).' Please make sure to emphasize why it is that our teaching staff and our department's other resources can help you acquire and master these techniques.

### **General Advice**

- Make it professional. Think 'job application'!
- Keep to the word limit (500 words)
- Demonstrate good English/proofreading
- Make it clear and easy to follow (can mix bullet points and continuous prose)

### **Questions you should answer**

- Why do you want to do your research?
- How does it link to work you have done already at BA and MA level, or in the profession?
- How have these courses/experiences prepared you for doctoral study?
- If you are entering your second or third year, how has your progress to date prepared you to finish on time, with an excellent result?
- What are your longer term objectives? (value added for the taxpayer!)

### **Your statement should include:**

- Scope of research project
- Sources for it
- Research Methods
- An approximate timetable (remember the research and writing should fit within three years)
- Information on what training you might need to develop necessary skills (Although an MA/MMUS will have helped here, it is perfectly OK to say you need further training)

- brief comments on why you have chosen the particular supervisor/our department and what the research environment has to offer (e.g. proximity of primary sources; the secondary works needed for project; supervisor a leading researcher in the field...)

### **Comments on previously successful applications:**

- ‘those applications which stood out were those which demonstrated innovative, imaginative and independent thinking and approaches’
- ‘those which made convincing case on significance of proposed topic’
- and ‘gave the impression of being well informed in general on the subject area’

### **Criteria**

Those judging your application will be asking themselves if your application makes a convincing case that you will be able to

- manage your research project, become proficient in the special field of research you are studying, and display adequate motivation and perseverance to achieve success at PhD level.

and if your work has the potential to result in

- a project of sufficient scope, originality, and theoretical interest to constitute a genuine contribution to the subject in the form of the understanding of a problem, the advancement of knowledge or the generation of new ideas.

Make sure that your statement and your references speak to your ability to meet these goals!