

James McCune Smith PhD Scholarships 2026/27 – Information for Applicants

Research Proposal Guidance

The Research Proposal* should be a detailed description of the intended research topic. It will form the basis for assessing the application, along with the Personal Statement and academic qualifications. The proposal should be written in a clear and concise manner. The main body of the Research Proposal (excluding the bibliography) should be a maximum of 1,500 words.

Reviewers of this proposal will include those beyond your discipline in the respective Colleges so the overview should be accessible to those from different subject areas.

PhD research that includes creative practice is very much encouraged. Where candidates are proposing a practice research project, they should provide a portfolio with examples of their creative work alongside a brief description of the works and if/how they relate to the proposed research. Please submit a word or PDF document with links to Dropbox/Google Drive/OneDrive (or similar) where we can access examples of your work. If you are at all unsure about how to assemble these materials and what might be required, please do speak to your prospective supervisor or subject/school PGR convener for additional guidance.

The Research Proposal should include the following sections:

- **Title**
- **Overview** – a general introduction that succinctly sets out exactly what the project seeks to explore. This should also include the research questions) to be addressed and the overall aim of the project.
- **Context** – situate the research within the relevant literature/s. Why is the research important? This should include a brief summary of research already taken in the field, addressing key works and researchers/scholars. Specific attention should be paid to problems in the existing literature and ways in which your proposed research challenges/addresses these problems. You should also give an account of the theoretical issues relevant to your research, and whether you intend to test existing theories or develop new ones.
- **Methodology** – provide a detailed account of the methodology and/or methods that will be used. Specific attention should be paid, where relevant, to any innovative aspects of the proposed methodology.
- **[Where relevant] An indication of ethical issues** associated with this proposal (including those that may impact on formal ethics committee approval and those requiring ongoing consideration in the field/during analysis) and proposed actions to mitigate these.
- **Impact** – a brief discussion of the implications of the proposed research for the broader discipline, any practical applications, and/or any policy relevance.

* A Research Proposal is not required for applicants to the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences or in the Schools of Chemistry, Mathematics and Statistics and Physics and Astronomy.

Applicants should, however, provide a short overview of their proposed research area in their Personal Statement.

Personal Statement (500 words)

Successfully undertaking a PhD requires not only academic ability but also resourcefulness, and commitment. It involves a range of skills including the ability to communicate complex ideas (about why a research question is of societal and academic importance, why it can be addressed using particular methods and why your findings matter), planning and organisation (including within changing circumstances), working with others (inside and outside of universities) to increase the chances of your research making a difference.

Drawing on your own background (including your life experiences, journey to/through university, work experiences or volunteering) please provide a summary of why you are ready to undertake a PhD now and how you will flourish as a result of PhD funding. You might include, for example, personal challenges that you have overcome or achievements that you are proud of in your work, study or life experiences and how these map onto the skills required to flourish in a PhD programme. Challenges could include, but are not limited to, protected characteristics, socio-economic status and of being first-in-a-generation to university or care-experienced.

Which School do I name on my application?

The School you select on your online application should be the one aligned with the primary supervisor. If you are unsure please email JMSPHD@glasgow.ac.uk.

How your application will be assessed

The academic supervisor will review your proposal and personal statement and confirm if they wish to support your application. Applications will then be reviewed and ranked to shortlist for interview in each College on the following categories: candidate capabilities (academic achievements), and professional and life experiences. Both areas are given equal weighting. Shortlisted candidates will then be invited to interview.