With respect to proposals, I would suggest that 1500 to 2500 words is an appropriate length (and aiming for 2000 words is good practice).  There is no fixed or required template for proposals, however, the following should provide a helpful guide.  This is not a prescription so other approaches are possible and welcomed.

1.       Introduction – a very brief allusion to the nature and purpose of the proposed study, and set-out the structure of the remainder of the proposal

2.       Statement of the broad aims of the research and any related (or more detailed) research questions.  Also, it is useful to examine briefly here, ‘why is this topic relevant and important’, and ‘why should the topic be studied at this time’

3.       Context-setting and literature review – this should be brief but it is useful to set-out how the problem/issue/question has emerged – what is the background and what factors have led to the requirement for further research in the selected area?  Who has contributed to debates and development of theory in the field?  What are the main arguments that have been advanced by various commentators?  What current theories/concepts are at the heart of debates?

4.       Methodology – what forms of data are required in order to address the research questions and how will data/information be gathered?  What type of methodological approach is implied, and what data gathering tools might be deployed?  A detailed statement is not necessary but applicants should convey an understanding of the philosophical and practical aspects of research.

5.       Contribution – what outcomes are anticipated and what forms of new knowledge is the research expected to generate?

6.       References – always include a list of references (based on citations in text) – Harvard style is preferable.