Research Degree Handbook
2017/18

Edge Hill University
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Introduction

This handbook provides advice and guidance about the processes and procedures that frame your experience as a research degree student. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of students, supervisors and all departments and units within the University that have a significant role in relation to research degrees. In addition, it outlines the research degree enrolment and examination processes, along with the induction and mandatory research student training. While we have tried to be as comprehensive as possible in this handbook, it is essential that you regularly check your Edge Hill student e-mail and the PGR Blackboard for updates.

The student experience

Research degrees at Edge Hill tailor the specific experience of each student to his or her individual learning and skills needs in becoming a fully developed researcher, and in completing a specific individual research project.

You will be supported in your research by a Director of Studies (DoS) and, in the case of PhD or professional doctorate, up to two additional academics with expertise in the areas of investigation or method(s) being used. You will also receive research training reflecting our commitments and obligations identified in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.¹

To tailor your experience, your learning and skills needs are assessed at the beginning of each academic year, and reviewed regularly. Your supervisors are central to this. They will help you to develop an understanding of the ways in which the concepts, ideas and problems covered in research training manifest themselves in your individual research project and specific disciplinary areas.

All Edge Hill research degrees have the following components:

1. A research project.
2. Non-modular research training.
3. Learning and skills needs analysis.
4. A programme of related studies to address learning and skills needs.
5. Supervision through which the student experience will be tailored to the needs of the individual.

Whilst each research degree takes a specific form, they always preserve these five core components. There are, of course, differences in the length of the research proposal required after the first few months of registration, and in the length of the final

¹ [https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers)
thesis or dissertation. The five basic components listed above take the following form in each degree:

**Masters by Research**

*(MRes or LLM by Research)*

- Research proposal (5,000 words, no viva).
- Research project (dissertation or approved equivalent up to 30,000 words and viva).
- Core training (classroom-based sessions tailored to the needs of individual students in supervisory tutorials).
- Methodological training (classroom-based sessions tailored to the needs of individual students in supervisory tutorials).
- Learning and skills needs analysis at the beginning of the programme of research.
- A programme of related studies designed to address identified needs.
- Research proposal (up to 15,000 words and viva).
- Research project (dissertation or approved equivalent up to 55,000 words and viva).
- Core training (classroom-based sessions tailored to the needs of individual students in supervisory tutorials).
- Methodological training (classroom-based sessions tailored to the needs of individual students in supervisory tutorials).
- Subject-specific training (classroom-based methods, theory and general subject knowledge sessions tailored to the needs of individual students in supervisory tutorials).
- Learning and skills needs analysis at the beginning of each year of the programme of research.
- A programme of related studies designed to address identified needs.
• Research proposal (up to 15,000 words and viva).
• Research project (thesis or approved equivalent up to 80,000 words and viva).
• Core training (classroom-based sessions tailored to the needs of individual students in supervisory tutorials).
• PhD training (a short programme of additional sessions solely for PhD students nearing completion, focussed on developing students for careers in academia or research-related employment elsewhere. Tailored to the needs of individual students in supervisory tutorials).
• Learning and skills needs analysis at the beginning of each year of the programme of research.
• A programme of related studies designed to address identified needs.²

² Some PhD students may find certain methodological training sessions useful as contributions to a programme of related studies. Those sessions are not mandatory for PhD students, but they can attend them if they wish.
Roles and responsibilities

The Graduate School

The Graduate School oversees training for research degree students and supervisors to ensure the sharing of good practice in accordance with relevant regulations, policies, procedures and guidance. The Graduate School, therefore:

- Provides support and guidance for the University’s research degree student community;
- Oversees the research degree regulations;
- Provides administrative oversight for all aspects of student registration;
- Organises all central training for PGR students across all years of registration, along with the central research student induction;
- Provides an annual induction for all new supervisors;
- Is responsible for planning and coordinating research degree supervisor development Administers PGR Bursary awards.

Postgraduate Research Students

The key to understanding the nature of postgraduate education is recognition of the fact that in such education learning should take place ‘under your own management’. This significantly alters the nature of responsibilities postgraduate research students have compared with taught postgraduate students or undergraduates.

You have sole responsibility for the production of your own work and, therefore, for ensuring that the work is your own work; correctly referenced and presented. While your supervisors will give advice, it is your responsibility to make decisions about whether to take that advice and precisely how to follow it.

Your supervisors cannot advise you unless you produce work on which they can give advice. Therefore, you, and not your supervisor, are responsible for driving the work forward. You are also responsible for the submission of work and the completion of relevant paperwork, including an annual appraisal report where required. It is your responsibility to ensure that such tasks are completed in accordance with any deadlines.

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It is also your responsibility to:

- Solely determine when your dissertation or thesis is ready for submission whether, or not, this has the approval of your supervisors. You are strongly advised not to submit without the support of your supervisory team but retain the right to do so;\(^4\)

- Ensure that the dissertation/thesis is submitted within the eligible registration period and complies with the required format;

- Confirming that the content of the dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award (although reference to work already submitted may be made in a dissertation covering a wider field);

- Ensure that work sent to supervisors is sufficiently well developed within agreed deadlines; you should not send every piece of written work that you produce to your supervisory team;

- Prepare adequately for supervisory meetings;

- Ensure that there is monthly written or telephone contact with all members of the supervisory team. You are also jointly responsible with your Director of Studies for ensuring that there is regular face-to-face contact (a minimum of four meetings per year for part-time students, or eight meetings per year for full-time students);\(^5\)

- Ensure that appropriate records are kept of supervisory meetings. Individual faculties and departments may have their own documentation for recording supervisory sessions: you should comply with any faculty-specific processes for holding and recording supervisory meetings;

- Ensure that you have sufficient time available to complete your research within the appropriate timescale outlined in the Research Degree Regulations. It is not the responsibility of the University to alter workloads for students who are employed by the University in any capacity. It should be noted that full-time students, including Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), are expected to commit 35 hours per week to their research. Part-time students should be aware that they are expected to devote 23.5 hours per week to their research (part-time registration is not 50% of full-time registration);

- Ensure that you have suitable facilities and an appropriate room in which to work, whether at home or on campus. While the University provides certain

\(^4\) However, submitting for final viva earlier than the expected time to completion requires the approval of all members of the supervisory team, as does making a registration or progression submission at any time.

\(^5\) There are additional requirements if you are an international student. The International Office can advise on those.
facilities, including those found in the Postgraduate Research Students' Room, you should not rely on access to those facilities. While the Postgraduate Research Students’ Room is exclusively used for research degree business, that can include meetings and events concerned with research degrees. Some departments are able to provide desks for research students – you will need to clarify this with the relevant department;

- Maintain records of training and development undertaken as a result of learning and skills needs assessment and, where possible, recognise when training is required and seek appropriate help;
- Attend all mandatory training;
- Make supervisors aware of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect your work;
- Attend any development opportunities identified as useful by the learning and skills needs analyses;
- Ensure that appropriate ethical approval is sought prior to the commencement of primary research. No primary research should be conducted until all necessary ethical approval has been given;
- Keep full written records in relation to ethical approval. You should be able to produce written evidence of ethical approval by the appropriate committee on request;
- Be familiar with the University’s regulations and policies insofar as they are relevant to research degree students. That includes, but is not limited to, the Research Degree Regulations and policies in relation to health and safety, intellectual property, research ethics and electronic repositories. Such documents may be updated each year or during the year, so you should ensure you are looking at the current version (this is usually indicated on the document);
- Ensure your personal details are correct on the student record system so you receive relevant communication.\(^6\) You can do this through Student Central.

\(^6\) You should check your student e-mail inbox at least once a week – the Graduate School and faculty administrators will only use this address to contact you, regardless of whether you also have a staff account. If you miss key information because you did not check your student e-mails, or because of an automatic forwarding error, it will not be grounds for an extension to a deadline.
Research Degree Supervisors

Your Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring supervision on a regular and frequent basis and, where appropriate, managing the supervisory team. The Director of Studies will be a permanent member of Edge Hill staff.

Normally, MRes students will be supervised solely by the Director of Studies but some may have more than one supervisor. Doctoral students (PhD and professional doctorate) have a supervisory team of two, or sometimes three, members of staff.

The following responsibilities apply for research degree supervisors:

- All supervisors are responsible for reading and commenting on your work in a timely manner - normally within four working weeks. However, you must recognise that supervisors have many other responsibilities as part of their role as academic staff. As a consequence, there will be occasions when staff are unable to provide feedback quickly. You and your supervisors should plan accordingly;

- Supervisors are responsible for making themselves available for regular supervisory meetings. Again, there will be times of the academic year, or periods when staff are on annual leave or attending conferences, when it will not be possible for meetings to take place. You should discuss this with your Director of Studies, or supervisory team, and plan accordingly. While you may meet with your supervisors individually, in cases where there is a team, you should also meet with them collectively on a regular basis;

- The Director of Studies is responsible for the completion of the learning and skills needs assessment with you, while you are responsible for keeping a record of skills development activities;

- The Director of Studies is responsible for submitting proposals for the final examination team to the Graduate School Board of Studies at least three months prior to your final viva submission;

- Supervisors are required to attend research degree supervisor development sessions on a regular basis.
Departments and Faculties

Each faculty has a research lead (Associate Dean with responsibility for research, or Head of Research) who oversees all aspects of research including research degree matters, alongside whom sits a PGR tutor in FHSC and FoE, and a Graduate School PGR contact for each of the departments in FAS. All queries in the first instance should go to the PGR Tutors in FHSC and FoE and to the relevant Graduate School PGR Contact in FAS departments and only to the faculty research leads where the issue cannot be resolved at the local level. PGR Tutors and Graduate School PGR Contacts are listed in appendix 4.

The Graduate School Board of Studies

The Graduate School Board of Studies is the progression and award board for research degrees at Edge Hill. It also considers and approves amendments to policies in relation to research degrees that reflect national agendas on doctoral study.

The Graduate School Board of Studies is responsible for the following:

- Registration and admission of students to research degrees
- The appointment of an appropriate supervisory team
- Approving progression of research degree students and awards
• Regularly monitoring the progress of research degree students and approving extensions to periods of study where appropriate

• Approving arrangements for the final examination of research degrees

• The approval of regulations and procedures pertaining to any of the areas above.

The Board meets four times a year. Should you or your supervisor need to submit any paperwork to the Board (e.g. examination teams for approval), you should do so via GraduateSchool@edgehill.ac.uk no later than the deadline for papers.

Deadlines are strict, so late papers will be held until the subsequent meeting.

Occasionally, some urgent matters requiring the Board’s attention will come to light outside the meeting cycle. If there is no upcoming meeting, the following can be considered by a sub-group of Board members:

• Intercalation requests

• Extension requests

• Changes to mode of study

• Changes to target award sought

• Reports from students whose progress is under review

• Matters of quality enhancement, assurance and management.
Other relevant people, departments and units
Research training and development

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, chapter B11,\(^7\) defines eighteen indicators of sound practice in relation to research degrees. Indicator fourteen states:

Research students have appropriate opportunities for developing research, personal and professional skills. Each research student's development needs are identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree; these are regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.

By including a learning and skills needs analysis that informs the development of a programme of related studies, research degrees at Edge Hill not only meet the relevant indicator of sound practice, but also add an additional level of learning experience by tailoring research training to your needs in tutorial supervision.

Such tailoring means that the core training, methodological training and programme of related studies are not discrete components of the programme of research. Rather, these learning experiences are interconnected through classroom sessions and consideration, during tutorial supervision, of the way the various issues raised manifest themselves in your specific research project and the relevant academic discipline in which you are working.

Learning and Skills Needs Analysis

You will need to complete a Learning and Skills Needs Analysis,\(^8\) informed by the Researcher Development Framework (RDF; its four central domains are shown overleaf),\(^9\) in order to identify your development requirements. In the induction week, you will be introduced to the RDF and will then discuss your needs with your Director of Studies and identify concrete targets for development on the basis of which you will design your programme of related studies.

\(^7\) [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Quality-Code-Chapter-B11.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Quality-Code-Chapter-B11.aspx)

\(^8\) [http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/13516/](http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/13516/)

\(^9\) [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf). Diagram taken from the Vitae Researcher Development Statement.
It is impossible to address all areas in the four domains simultaneously; therefore, it is for you to discuss with your supervisors which elements are a priority at any given time.

Core training

This portion of the development programme must be attended by all students in their first year.

The material in the core training covers research design, research project management, research data management, research ethics, and some of the more general conceptual, epistemological and methodological matters in relation to research. The core training comprises a series of twelve short (60-90 minute) sessions designed to introduce you to some considerations that, while not generic because they apply in different ways in different cases, are of relevance to all research. These sessions are facilitated by a small team of academics from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and will take the form of structured discussions.
Additional ‘PhD training’ is provided in the second and third year (and beyond) focussing more on professional development and preparing for post-PhD life. These sessions include understanding the HE environment, including the Research Excellence Framework (REF), preparing for post-doctoral positions, understanding impact, open access and research data management (key developments which affect all researchers and are increasingly prominent). There will also be drop-in sessions such as preparing CVs, responding to peer review, completing a job application: the full programme will be available via Blackboard and you will need to register for the sessions.

The full programme of core training sessions can be found in appendix 1. It is also available via Blackboard.

**Methodological training**

All MRes and professional doctorate students must attend a minimum of six methodological training sessions (you are free to select which six sessions you attend, but you should seek supervisory advice in making that decision). PhD students should draw on the methodological training sessions as necessary as part of their programme of related studies. There are no restrictions as to which sessions any given student can attend; all research students can attend any of the methodological training sessions and should take supervisory advice on which would be most appropriate.

The methodological training comprises a programme of structured discussion sessions. Some of the sessions address issues principally of interest to those working in science subjects, some address issues principally of interest to those working in social science subjects and some address issues most likely to be of interest to those working in arts and humanities subjects. In addition, there are a small number of methodological training sessions that are designed to transcend specific disciplinary boundaries.

The full programme of methodological training sessions can be found in appendix 2. It is also available via Blackboard.

**Programme of related studies**

Along with your Director of Studies, you will design a programme of related studies to meet specific learning and skills needs identified through your learning and skills needs analysis. Your programme of related studies could include attendance at departmental research seminars covering appropriate topics, research training sessions offered by departments or faculties, and sessions that are part of the University’s Researcher Development Programme. In addition, as noted above, PhD students may include some of the methodological training sessions as part of their programme of related studies, while MRes and professional doctorate students may include additional methodological training sessions, beyond the six that they are required to attend.
The Research Office organises the Researcher Development Programme,\(^{10}\) which is open to all academic staff and research students in the University. Enrolment on sessions is via Blackboard. This programme is unlikely to plug significant gaps in knowledge, particularly around methods, but will be able to introduce you to different approaches, which can then be developed further (the schedule is in appendix 3).

External training events are provided by organisations such as Vitae,\(^ {11}\) the National Centre for Research Methods,\(^ {12}\) Cathie Marsh Institute for Social Research\(^ {13}\) among others. In addition, there are MOOCs (massive open online courses) across a vast range of subject areas. While many of these external training opportunities are free or low cost, some incur a considerable fee. You need to consult with your supervisory team before committing to external training as there are no specific funds to support this, although you can apply to the PGR Bursary Fund for a contribution to the costs if you can demonstrate that the need is sufficient but could not have been predicted.

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\(^{10}\) [https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/research/Researcher+Development+Programme](https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/research/Researcher+Development+Programme)

\(^{11}\) [https://www.vitae.ac.uk/events](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/events)

\(^{12}\) [http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/](http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/)

\(^{13}\) [http://www.cmist.manchester.ac.uk/about/](http://www.cmist.manchester.ac.uk/about/)
Research governance

All researchers at Edge Hill should design and conduct their research to the highest standards. The key principles you should follow to achieve this can be found in the Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research. Best practice should be followed for all research matters, including:

- Research design
- Ethics
- Human tissue licence
- Research data management
- Conflicts of interest
- Insurance and indemnity

Information on all of these can be found on the University research governance web pages.14

Research ethics

Your research project must undergo ethical scrutiny at the point of project registration and the examiners may then decide that ethical approval is necessary. In some cases, this may already have taken place before project registration.

You should discuss the ethical dimensions of your project with your supervisors. Additionally, you can consult the ethics committee in your particular faculty by contacting the secretary. Names are listed in appendix 4.

When registration of the project is approved, it is conditional on successful ethical scrutiny or approval – normally within three months of the date of project registration.

You should remember that you could be asked by anyone within Edge Hill – or external individuals and organisations with an interest in the research – to produce proof that ethical scrutiny has been undertaken and, where required, approval granted, and you therefore have permission to embark on data collection. Failure to present this written confirmation when requested is the equivalent of having no approval.

No data can be collected or evidence gathered before you have received written confirmation that the project has passed appropriate ethical scrutiny/approval.

14 https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/governance/
Process for ethical scrutiny and approval

1. Project registration submission
2. Ethical scrutiny
3. Ethical approval required?
   - Yes: Apply to appropriate research ethics committee (DREC, FFREC, UREC, external)
   - No: Commence data collection
4. Ethical approval granted
Research Ethics Committees

Ethical scrutiny and approval processes begin in your department and faculty and extend up through the faculty to the University Research Ethics Sub-committee (URESC). While scrutiny can take place within your department, only certain Departmental Research Ethics Committees (DREC) are authorised to grant ethical approval. If your department is not one of these, you should submit your application for ethical approval to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). The relationships between Edge Hill’s ethics approval bodies are:

![Diagram of ethics approval bodies]

Edge Hill research ethics committees can also accept ethical approval from some appropriate research ethics committees outside Edge Hill but the Edge Hill committee must scrutinise the external approval before you begin your data collection.

Working with human tissue

If your research will involve the collection, use or storage of human tissue it will be subject to the Human Tissue Act 2004.\(^{15}\) You must therefore seek training and advice from the University’s Designated Individual (Professor Adrian Midgley).

Applications for ethical approval for projects involving human tissue can take longer than other ethics applications so you should plan accordingly and ensure that you follow any advice and guidance provided.

Further details are available on the University human tissue web pages.\(^{16}\)

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15 Edge Hill has a research licence issued by the Human Tissue Authority (licensing number 12632).
16 [https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/human-tissue/](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/human-tissue/)
Risk assessment

All research projects should undergo a risk assessment – for many this will be a quick and simple process that requires the researcher to consider all the different elements of risk associated with the project. You should review your risk assessment regularly as circumstances change and therefore the mitigation of risk will also change. There is no Edge Hill form for you to complete but the University’s Risk Assessment Guidance is available on the University governance web pages, and your professional body may require you to complete a specific risk assessment.
Examinations

Research degrees are assessed through a combination of written submission and oral examination (the viva), in which you will defend your written work.

The particular process of assessment you undertake depends on the research degree on which you are enrolled:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Project registration</th>
<th>Progression</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Viva</td>
<td>Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRes</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional doctorate</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point at which each of these assessments takes place during your research degree is illustrated by the following timelines (based on full-time study).

The underlying processes are largely the same across all three research degrees. The following guidance on each examination can be accessed via Blackboard:

- Research project registration guidance\(^{17}\)
- Progression viva guidance\(^{18}\)
- Final viva guidance\(^{19}\)

\(^{17}\) [http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/11640/](http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/11640/)

\(^{18}\) [http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/12121/](http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/12121/)

\(^{19}\) [http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/12120/](http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/12120/)
MRes timeline (based on full-time enrolment)
Professional doctorate timeline (part-time only)
PhD timeline (based on full-time enrolment)
Publishing material from the thesis or dissertation

If you publish material from your thesis or dissertation in journals or books you should append the material to the final submission for the examiners to note. While you are not required to publish during the degree, in some disciplines it is increasingly the norm and may be helpful when looking for posts immediately on completing your studies. Publication plans should be discussed with your supervisory team.

Each discipline has its own norms about co-authoring with supervisors and the conventions for the ordering of authors’ names on the publication, so we cannot provide specific guidance here. Generally, we would only recommend that you engage with publication if it does not pose a significant distraction to the completion of the degree itself. It is expected that most students will want to publish their research findings on completion of the thesis but this will require some adaptation from what is presented for examination.

All theses are lodged with the University research repository (EHRA) and the British Library once they are approved unless you have permission from the Graduate School Board of Studies for your thesis to be exempt from deposit for a period of time. Creative works tend to be exempt, in part because they are published in exactly the same format as the work submitted for examination. In such cases, you must still submit it electronically to the Graduate School for archiving – you may find it useful to divide the viva submission into two volumes: the analytical commentary (rarely exempt) and the exempt section (e.g. creative work).

Intellectual property

The University recognises that students will normally own the intellectual property (IP) from the works that they produce in the course of their programme of study, including essays, theses, dissertations and independent study projects. Research students are required to confirm that their works can be made publicly accessible through EHRA and enable access to any online catalogues to which EHRA links (e.g. the British Library). This is done through the submission of a final thesis cover sheet. There are some exceptions to students owning the intellectual property from their research projects, which are detailed in the University’s Intellectual Property Policy.

20 https://repository.edgehill.ac.uk/
21 http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/19260
22 https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/intellectual-property-policy/
Research degree regulations

The Research Degree Regulations\textsuperscript{23} is the single most important document while you are enrolled on a research degree at Edge Hill.

The Research Degree Regulations form part of the University’s general Academic Regulations.\textsuperscript{24} Where the Research Degree Regulations are in conflict with the general regulations, the Research Degree Regulations take precedence.

You should read the Research Degree Regulations at the beginning of each academic year. The Regulations are amended annually, while the appendices (schedules A, B, C, etc.) are amended as necessary, so it is best to consult the online documents to ensure you are reading the latest version.

Academic appeals

If you feel you have suitable grounds, you may appeal Graduate School Board of Studies decisions relating to progression and award, or those of malpractice panels, under the terms of the Appeals Procedure set out in the general academic regulations.

Grounds for Appeal

Academic appeals may only be submitted on the following grounds:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item Procedural irregularity in the assessment process;\textsuperscript{25}
  \item Bias or perception of bias; or
  \item Exceptional mitigating circumstances, details which were, for good reason, were not previously available to the appropriate assessment board.
\end{enumerate}

The following matters do not, of themselves, form grounds for an appeal:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item Challenges to academic judgements of examiners on an assessment outcome or the level of award recommended or granted;
  \item Claims that academic performance was adversely affected by factors such as ill-health, where there is no independent, medical or other evidence to substantiate this;
  \item Complaints against the delivery of supervision and methods of assessment.
  \item Appeals where no new circumstances are presented or where there is no justification for failing to present the circumstances at the original board/panel.
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{23} \url{https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/research-degree-regulations/}
\textsuperscript{24} \url{https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/collection/academic/}
\textsuperscript{25} It is expected that the procedural irregularity would be on behalf of the University, not on behalf of the student; e.g. material administrative error, or an irregularity in the conduct of an assessment or panel in contravention of the relevant regulations or structures.
Issues, Concerns and Complaints

At Edge Hill University our vision is to provide the best possible student experience.

You may have one of several different types of concerns, so different people may be the most appropriate first point of contact:

- **Academic issues:**
  - Supervisors in the first instance
  - Departmental (FAS) or faculty postgraduate tutor (FHSC and FoE) if the problem concerns your supervisors, or if it cannot be resolved by your supervisors
  - Graduate School if departmental or faculty options are exhausted or inappropriate

- **Administrative issues:**
  - Departmental or faculty administrators in the first instance
  - Graduate School if local administrators cannot help

- **Health and personal issues:**
  - Supervisors; or
  - Student Services Health and Wellbeing Team

- **In general**
  - Students’ Union

Should you wish to raise a formal complaint, please follow the complaints procedure or contact Student Services for advice.

If you think you have grounds for a complaint, you need to contact the appropriate area *within three months* of the incident. Wherever possible, we try to resolve issues without escalating it to a formal process.

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26 [https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/studentservices/the-health-well-being-centre/](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/studentservices/the-health-well-being-centre/)
27 [https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/complaints-procedure/](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/complaints-procedure/)
Monitoring progress

Annual appraisal

PhD and professional doctorate

It is a requirement of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education\(^\text{28}\) that universities must ensure that they have mechanisms in place to identify and resolve issues relating to the academic progress of students. Edge Hill has implemented a process of annual appraisal to meet this obligation.

Appraisals also provide you with a clear opportunity each year to raise concerns about any aspect of the research process (although you can do this at any time of year). You will normally be required to complete an annual appraisal in May.

The appraisal requires you and your supervisors to submit separate online surveys which are then reviewed by two members of the Graduate School Board of Studies, and discussed at the July meeting of the Board. If any questions result from the appraisals, the Board may request more information from you or your supervisor. Failure to complete the appraisal, or if the Board has concerns about your progress, means that your progress will be placed under review (see below).

The appraisal process includes a review of the learning and skills needs analysis you carry out each September.

MRes

MRes students do not complete an annual appraisal survey because the period of registration for MRes students is much shorter than that for doctoral students. The progress of each MRes student is instead considered at a formal review process approximately half-way through the period of registration (six months in the case of full-time students, and nine month in the case of part-time students).

Progress review

There are occasions when research does not progress as planned. If you find yourself in such a situation, the Graduate School Board of Studies may determine that your progress should be placed under review in order to better support you to get back on track.\(^\text{29}\)

Progress may be placed under review by the Graduate School Board of Studies at any point during your registration. This could be at the request of the supervisory team, the department or faculty.


\(^{29}\) [http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/18951](http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/18951)
Student representation

Edge Hill wants its students to have a say on how it operates. To this end, you can make your views known through several channels:

Research degree student representatives

Each spring you will have a chance to elect some of your peers to represent you in formal and informal settings. You may even wish to stand for election yourself.\(^{30}\) Elections are run through the Edge Hill Students’ Union.

Student representatives are entirely independent of the Graduate School, so can raise concerns with the University on your behalf if you wish. They also arrange social events and an annual conference on campus, and run the Edge Hill PGR Facebook group.\(^ {31}\)

Your representatives for 2017/18 are:

- Laura Bliss
- Eleanor Whittaker
- Keegan Shepard

Your representatives are members of the Graduate School Board of Studies Student Experience Sub-Group. They also meet regularly with the Assistant Director for Postgraduate Research.

Their contact details can be found in appendix 4.

Edge Hill Students’ Union

The Students’ Union\(^{32}\) can provide you with free, independent advice and guidance on a range of matters you might encounter during your degree. They can also raise issues with the University on your behalf.

Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey (PRES)

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)\(^{33}\) is an annual survey run by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) across all universities to gather insight from postgraduate research students about their learning and supervision experience.

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\(^{30}\) [http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/22595](http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/22595)

\(^{31}\) [https://www.facebook.com/groups/edgehillpgrgroup/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/edgehillpgrgroup/)

\(^{32}\) [http://www.edgehillsu.org.uk/](http://www.edgehillsu.org.uk/)

\(^{33}\) [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/postgraduate-research-experience-survey](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/postgraduate-research-experience-survey)
The survey focusses on your experiences of:

- supervision
- resources
- research community
- progress monitoring and assessment
- skills and professional development

It also considers your motivations for enrolling on the research degree.

PRES enables the University to identify trends in the information provided. You can highlight individual issues through the PRES but your responses are anonymous so intervention and support cannot be targeted; if you have a specific problem requiring action you should seek assistance from one of the following: your supervisor; head of department; faculty; research degree student representatives; the Students’ Union; or the Graduate School.
Intercalation

Intercalation – or suspension of studies – is an approved period of time during which your student registration is paused due to medical reasons or other exceptional circumstances that make it very difficult to continue working on your research.

Most students will not need to intercalate but, if you feel you do, it is not an automatic right so you must apply in advance\(^{34}\) to the Graduate School Board of Studies using the intercalation request form\(^{35}\) and provide evidence that will allow the Board to make an informed decision.

If you request an intercalation during the first eight weeks of your research degree, you will instead be required to restart the following September. This is in part to ensure you can take full advantage of the necessary researcher development sessions that run only during the first term.

Intercalation period

The minimum duration of any single period of intercalation is three months. You can request up to a total of twelve months’ standard intercalation across the entirety of your research degree – this could be four periods of three months across three years of a PhD, or one period of twelve months, for example.

You should ask for the minimum period you might need to minimise the disruption to your research.

Should you need to extend an approved period of intercalation, you will again need to seek approval from the Board in advance of your approved return date – a request by e-mail to GraduateSchool@edgehill.ac.uk is sufficient for this but it should be supported in writing by your supervisors and be accompanied by suitable evidence. An extension can only be approved if you have time remaining from the twelve months allowed.

During intercalation, you must maintain regular contact with your supervisors to ensure you are aware of any key developments during your absence.

Returning from intercalation

Your student registration will continue on the return date approved by the Board regardless of whether you attend on that date and, while your deadlines will be moved to accommodate the intercalation, they will not be extended e.g. if your intercalation started two weeks before a submission deadline, you will have two weeks in which to

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\(^{34}\) Applications submitted shortly after the requested intercalation start date may be approved in exceptional circumstances but must be accompanied by a suitable explanation, and appropriate evidence, for the late request.

\(^{35}\) [http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/18838](http://www.eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/18838)
submit upon your return. Intercalation cannot be used to catch up if you are making slow progress in your research.

Your progress is automatically placed under review once you return to ensure that the transition back to your studies is smooth.

Parental intercalation

In order to support students who are new parents, parental intercalation operates in the same way as standard intercalation, with one key difference.

The twelve months maximum period for parental intercalation applies to each child rather than to your whole period of registration on the research degree. Furthermore, parental intercalation does not affect the twelve-month maximum period for standard intercalation, and vice versa.

It should be noted that Academic Registry does not differentiate between standard and parental intercalation in your student record but this has no bearing on approval.
Information and Resources

It is therefore essential that you also monitor other sources to ensure that you remain up-to-date with developments in the Graduate School and the wider University.

E-mails and network access

All students are provided with access to the University IT network – e-mail, files and storage – following enrolment on a research degree. This access will remain in place until you cease to be registered as a student.

If you have staff status at Edge Hill (as a GTA or for any other contract), you will also have network access through a staff account in addition to your student account; this means you have a separate staff e-mail account, staff storage, etc. The two accounts are not connected.

The Graduate School will only ever contact you at your student e-mail address so you must make sure you check that account regularly. The reason for this is that, at the end of your staff contract, your staff account will be deactivated and you will no longer have access to e-mails or folders associated with it. Our sending e-mails to your student e-mail address means we can be sure they will go to a live account.

Blackboard (Learning Edge)

The Graduate School has its own Blackboard area. When you log in to Learning Edge, you will see a ‘PGR’ link along the top.

This ‘PGR tab’ is a hub through which you can access the key information you will need during your research degree: regulations; guidance; forms; training calendar and resources; and links to other relevant web pages from around the University.

PGR Room and computer access

While Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) all have access to desk space in their departments so they can meet with the undergraduate students they teach, similar resources for non-GTA students cannot be guaranteed.

The Graduate School has therefore arranged for a PGR Room in the Main Building. Non-GTA students have priority in this room during times of high demand. Entry is via a keypad (contact the Graduate School for the code) and there are lockers in which you can leave your belongings for short periods.

The room contains six PCs with SPSS and NVivo installed. In the event that no computer in the PGR room is available, the University has open access computers
around campus – IT Services’ computer availability search tool\textsuperscript{36} can help you locate an available computer.

Any printing you do on campus will be on one of the many multi-function devices (MFD), for which you will need to ensure you have enough printing credit.

**Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)**

Learning Services has a team to support students with a range of SpLDs. If you have, or think you might have, an SpLD, the SpLD Support Team\textsuperscript{37} can help with one-to-one advice and guidance, specialist study skills, or with securing assistive technology.

It is important that you access the support you need while completing your research. Examiners will not make allowance during the viva, but you can get support during your degree to help you produce a thesis that is of the same standard as that of a student who does not have an SpLD.

\textsuperscript{36} [https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/computers](https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/computers)
\textsuperscript{37} [https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/ls/specific-learning-difficulties/](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/ls/specific-learning-difficulties/)
Financial Matters

Tuition fees

MRes students may be eligible for postgraduate student loans\(^{38}\) but no such scheme is available to doctoral students.

You are responsible for ensuring your fees are paid unless:

- There are arrangements in place for an external funding body to pay your fees directly to the University; or

- You are in receipt of a fee waiver (for example as part of a Graduate Teaching Assistant studentship).

Regardless of how your fees are paid, any debt regarding non-payment is ultimately your responsibility, so you should maintain an awareness of the payment channels and schedule.

Tuition fees for postgraduate students can usually be paid in full on enrolment or in three equal instalments. No charge is added for using a credit card.

Writing-up fee

*Doctoral degrees only.* As you approach the end of your PhD or professional doctorate, you may be eligible to apply for a reduced, fixed-term writing-up fee in lieu of the full year’s tuition fee. This must be approved by the Graduate School Board of Studies in advance and is fixed for twelve months.

Full details can be found in *Fees: writing-up and post-final viva.*\(^{39}\)

Post-final viva fees

As soon as you submit for your final viva, you will not incur any further tuition fees.\(^{40}\) There may be one further fee to pay however, depending on the outcome of your viva:

- Major amendments: amendments fee
- Revision and resubmission for re-examination: resubmission fee
- Any other final viva outcome: no further fee

Full details can be found in *Fees: writing-up and post-final viva.*

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\(^{38}\) [https://www.gov.uk/postgraduate-loan](https://www.gov.uk/postgraduate-loan)

\(^{39}\) [http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/23128](http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/23128)

\(^{40}\) Any fees already incurred by that point are still payable.
Financial support

The University offers some financial assistance and advice, including:

- Scholarships.\(^{41}\)

- Student Services can provide advice and administers the University Hardship Fund in case you experience an unforeseen financial emergency during your studies.\(^{42}\)

It is important that you plan your budget well and make use of the advice and guidance available.

Working during your degree

We understand that you may need to maintain employment during your degree but please remember that work commitments are not a justification for either intercalation or extension.

If you are a doctoral student and not in receipt of a studentship, your department may be able to offer you an opportunity as an associate tutor or research assistant. These are managed at the local level so you will need to ask your supervisor or head of department. There are specific restrictions in relation to additional work within the University for those on a GTA studentship and doctoral tutors.

Please note that you must balance the demands of your research with those of any employment:

- Full-time students are expected to devote 35 hours per week towards the project.

- Part-time students are expected to devote 23.5 hours per week towards the project.

PGR Bursaries

The Graduate School maintains a PGR Bursary fund, for which there are four deadlines each year.

PGR Bursaries are intended to support you with unforeseen research expenses, usually below £750 in value (with your department or faculty matching the amount awarded).\(^{43}\) They will not support daily costs or act as a hardship fund.

\(^{41}\) [https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/scholarships/](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/scholarships/)

\(^{42}\) [https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/studentservices/moneyadvice/](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/studentservices/moneyadvice/)

\(^{43}\) Applications to the PGR Bursary below £100 in value will not be considered and should be funded wholly by your department or faculty.
There is no prescriptive list of activities which may be funded, or indeed excluded. Examples of activities/opportunities which could be supported include:

- Fieldwork costs, including visits to archives, where these costs could not have been anticipated at the time of interview or registration
- Presentation of papers/posters at conferences
- Methodology training where it could not be anticipated at the time of interview or registration or is of particular value

Further details can be found in *PGR Bursary: how to apply.*[^44]

[^44]: [http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/24209](http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/id/document/24209)
Appendix 1: core training 2017/18

All sessions take place 13.00 – 14.30, other than those specified.

06 September 2017

Aspects of research design (14.00-15.30)

This session is an initial introduction to the notion of research design. Through discussion of your existing understanding of research, a number of the most important features of the research process will be identified. You will be gradually introduced to the idea that these are aspects of a whole, not parts in a temporally specific series, and helped to think about the implications of adjustments to any one of those features for the other aspects. The session will also consider the very idea of a ‘research process’, and we will discuss whether the expression ‘research process’ is potentially misleading insofar as it implies that there is a single process that all researchers follow, regardless of the specific nature of their research project.

13 September 2017

Academic writing I (13.00-14.00 for doctoral students, and 14.00-15.00 for MRes students)

Very few of you will have any experience of writing a document remotely near the length of the submission required for your research degree. A whole range of problems can emerge if you do not have a method of academic writing suitable for the production of a thesis or long dissertation. In this session you will be introduced to a technique of academic writing offered as a means of exemplifying the kinds of considerations that are important if you are to have a method of writing to help you address the difficulties presented by doctoral and MRes research. The content if the session is developed further in ‘Academic writing II’ on 25th October.

20 September 2017

Research questions

This session will help you to see the importance of specificity in the formulation of research questions and, through consideration of examples, the context-sensitivity of research questions. In addition, the connections between research questions and the other aspects of research design will be explored further by considering the thought that research is question centred or ‘erotetic’ in nature, such that research design can be conceived of in terms of what follows from having specific research questions if one’s goal is to answer those questions. In that way, choices in relation to methods of data collection and analysis, conceptualisation, theory and lines of argumentation can be understood as contributing to the strength of a claim to knowledge by providing a strong basis for the relevant claim.
27 September 2017

Research project management (09.00-10.30)

Students frequently encounter difficulties in completing a research degree, not because of limitations in intellectual ability, but because they do not have sufficiently well-developed skills in relation to the planning and management of a research project. In this session you will be introduced both to the importance of developing such skills and methods that will contribute to such development.

Equality and diversity in research design

In this session, you will be introduced to issues of equality and diversity in research, not only as matters important to ethical considerations in the design of research, but also as frequently of relevance to epistemological issues in research design. Failure to properly appreciate issues of equality and diversity in research can not only lead to difficulty in meeting the goal of non-maleficence in the conduct of research, and, as a consequence, lead to difficulties in gaining ethical approval, but it can also lead to poor research design in which features of the data can be explained by the failure to appreciate diversity, which, when unnoticed can result in claims to knowledge that are not well founded. In the worst cases, if such matters remain unrecognised until the research has been completed, the data can prove to be useless.

04 October 2017

Identifying, evaluating and constructing arguments

This session begins from the thought that it is reason and argumentation, not analysed data that tells us things and provides the ultimate basis for a claim to knowledge. You will be introduced to the notion of an argument via the concept of inference and the idea of certain things following from other things being the case. The consequences of basing one’s claims to knowledge on certain types of inference will also be introduced.

11 October 2017

Research data management

This session will explain how to generate a research data management plan for your project, which is a requirement of your project registration process. Part of the session will be used for you to start writing the data management plan. This session is compulsory for all first year students (or part-time equivalents) but of relevance for all students, and it is compulsory to complete this session at some point in the course of your studies.
18 October 2017

Concepts

The importance of how we understand the concepts central to any academic field and specific research project will be explored in this session. How we understand a concept makes a difference to how we explain it, and to what things fall under it and what theories are, and are not, appropriate, along with where we go looking for things that fall under it if we want to measure them. A puzzle will be introduced to sharpen understanding of the importance of conceptual matters – empirical research involves prior conceptual commitments, which can’t be shown to be correct by conducting additional empirical research because that, in turn, introduces further prior conceptual commitments, which simply begs the question. Understanding the issue here and how to resolve it opens the way to a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of empirical research and claims to knowledge based on such research.

25 October 2017

Academic writing II

During the session ‘Academic writing I’ on 13th September, you will be introduced to a technique of academic writing offered as a means of exemplifying the kinds of considerations that are important if you are to have a method (and it would be extremely unwise not to have a method) for the production of various different kinds of academic text. While that technique is simply an example, this session will build on ‘Academic Writing I’ by giving you the opportunity to begin to use the technique to help you to plan the first draft of your project registration proposal. You will prepare in advance of the session, and so will arrive with material that can be used to assist in the production of a two-page summary of the content of your project registration proposal. The session will help you to think about the structure of the proposal, your research questions, central concepts and theories, proposed methods of data collection and analysis, proposed contribution to knowledge and central arguments. On completion of the session, and relevant follow-up work, you will have produced a working document that will have the potential to form the core of your planning in the production of the project registration proposal.

01 November 2017

Claims to knowledge

Making a significant, independent and original contribution to knowledge is the central criterion (although strictly speaking it is three criteria) for the award of a PhD or professional doctorate. While the requirement for originality is not a feature of the criteria for award of the MPhil or MRes, the need to make a contribution to knowledge is of primary importance for all research degrees. Not just any claim counts as a claim to knowledge in the relevant sense, so you will be introduced to the importance of the
relationship between claims to knowledge and making a contribution to knowledge, where what counts as knowledge in such cases is largely framed by the nature of existing work in any given field. In addition, the central importance of a defence of any claims to knowledge in either the dissertation or thesis, and in the viva, will be explored, along with the notion of cases for claims to knowledge. The session should begin to provoke a reflexive awareness of your understanding of the practices you undertake in claiming knowledge and the scope and limits to such claims.

08 November 2017

Combining disciplines

In recent years increasing emphasis has been placed, particularly by funding bodies, on research that combines two or more disciplines in addressing a research topic. Generally, that development has gone unquestioned, with advocates of such research pointing to the popularity and alleged success of areas of inquiry such as cognitive science, which includes a range of disciplines, including, inter alia, cognitive neuroscience, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, philosophy and computer science to study the mind and cognition. Such areas of inquiry are often claimed to be ‘inter-disciplinary’, which is frequently contrasted with ‘multi-disciplinary’ research, which combined disciplines in an importantly different way. This session will raise critical questions about the nature of inter-disciplinary research with a view to sharpening our understanding of central issues of research design that emerge when one attempts to combine disciplines. Consideration will also be given to the related, and frequently misunderstood, topics of triangulation and multi-methods approaches to research.

15 November 2017

Ethical considerations in research

Put simply, ethics is the study of moral decision-making - what is good and bad and right and wrong and what it means to make these judgements. Research ethics applies such concerns to your research, from framing your question to articulating and disseminating your findings. Research ethics conveys a number of challenges for the researcher: what does it mean to be, or claim to be, an ethical researcher?; what is the practice of ethics in research? (If it is just completing a form in order to tick a box to get approval, however important that might be, it would seem of minimal importance); How can ethical theories and approaches inform research design, practice and problems?; what are the main problems of social research, research in the natural sciences and arts and humanities research, and how can they be tackled?

This session will raise these questions and meditate on them as a first step in encouraging you to think critically and ethically about how you do your research.
22 November 2017

Research governance and ethical approval processes

This is an introduction to the University’s Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research which is where we lay out the expectations of how researchers should engage with the research process. The nature and purpose of ethical approval will be considered so that you appreciate why ethical scrutiny of proposed research is necessary and what those conducting such scrutiny are looking for. In addition, the requirements of the formal processes and procedures in relation to research ethics will be introduced. The session reflects national benchmarks including those of the UK Research Integrity Office, UKRI and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

29 November 2017

Impact

The Research Excellence Framework (2014) introduced the concept of impact (the influence of academic research outside of academia), and quickly ensured that impact became a prominent feature of contemporary research. The concept, however, is not unproblematic and wildly varying assessments could be given of the influence of the notion of impact on academia. This session will begin with an overview of the impact agenda, which will be followed by a critical discussion of the concept of impact and its influence on the nature of contemporary research and academia.
Appendix 2: methodological training 2017/18

20 September 2017

The Contexts, Conjunctures and Frames for Social Research

09.00 – 10.30

Social science research does not happen in a vacuum and the subjects of social scientific research need to be understood within wider social, cultural, political, economic, spatial and temporal (and other) arenas. These context and conjunctures are important to understanding the trends, developments and phenomena that the social scientists study. It is reflected in both the particular literature of the field of study and the intellectual ideas that have built our understanding of that field.

This session will involve a discussion about the importance of context and conjuncture, and the way in which we frame our approach to our research by developing our particular question and including or excluding different perspectives and fields of study. It raises a number of interesting questions: How do we make decisions around how much and how little context we need to include in your research in order to produce digestible and effective research? How far is situating our research in context and conjuncture making research conform to orthodox understandings or recognising the conditions under which our chosen research subject emerges? How do we both understand and take a critical approach to our field of research? Can be make universal statements or are all social phenomena only to be understood in particular contexts and conjunctures?

This session looks at the intellectual issues around framing your questions and the importance of knowing the wider field and making decisions about focus and framing in writing a thesis.

Critical and Cultural Theory

10.30 – 12.00

Students working in the humanities will engage a range of philosophical, theoretical and historical approaches, and explore the work of cultural criticism, reception and production through a range of critical perspectives, interdisciplinary insights and applications. These theoretical and historical perspectives allow scholars to tease out the critical charge embedded in the notion of culture itself, and the transformative potential of creative and critical work in the arts and humanities. But, as Szeman, Blacker and Sully have pointed out, ‘[w]hat makes critical theory, “critical” is its ceaseless interrogation of the process by which knowledge gets transformed into doxa’ (xvii-xvii: 2017). This session will discuss the importance, uses and applications of critical and cultural theory within the humanities.
The Scientific Method

15.00 – 16.30
A clear understanding of the scientific method is fundamental to the research process in Science. This session will explore the history of science and the development of the formal methodological process in use today from the origins of scientific philosophy.

04 October 2017
The Uses and Role of Theory

09.00 – 10.30
The framing of research questions, the focus of research, the development of arguments and evaluations and the interpretation of data are all, whether explicitly or indirectly, influenced by theory. Theories reflect a mixture of intellectual argument, analytical frameworks and ideological perspectives. Theories reflect world views, provide critical frameworks to be both tested by and to interpret research, and to base argumentations and claims upon. The relationship between theories, research design and delivery and the eventual analysis and interpretation of research is underpinned by research. Theories are also amended, contested, reinforced and rejected by research.

This session will explore the relationship between theory and research. It will explore how different theoretical approaches and framings influence the development of research questions, strategies and interpretations, and different philosophical starting points lead to different research conclusions.

Text

10.30 – 12.00
Analysis of text/s will be important to the work of most students within the humanities, but that text may come in a variety of forms, and approaches to it will be broad and diverse. Within cultural and historical studies, the centrality of text is debated and contested, and how you identify and approach text in your own work will be a fundamental consideration. Uncovering meaning and interpreting a text, understanding why and how a text was produced, investigating the authenticity or validity of a text, exploring what people do with texts, defining what relationship one text bears to others, and engaging in the discourses that surround a text are just some of the methods you might employ. This session will discuss and question the uses of text/s within the humanities.

Objectivity and Bias in Experimental Design

15.00 – 16.30
This session will build upon the broad themes addressed in Session 1, exploring ways to achieve objectivity, identify potential sources of bias and subjectivity when
formulating and testing hypotheses and research questions, designing experiments, and selecting sampling approaches.

Truth, Post-truth and Speaking Truth to Power: A Critical Discussion

17.00 – 19.00

Contemporary politics is replete with claims that we live in a world of ‘post-truth’. Post-truth refers to claims that emotion and affect are as important as reason and evidence in arguments for political change. It arises from a culture of hostility to the ‘expert’ and to an investigative news media, and constitutes a populist rejection of ‘elites’.

Whilst this cynicism about the importance of reason and argument is politically problematic, it also arises from foregoing claims to truth that have failed to produce a truth that has served social progress. Truth has been an ideological artefact, a contestation of competing interests and elite and cultural power, the politics of truth under capitalist modernity replaced the religious deferral of truth to belief with an enlightenment preoccupation with the possibilities of science. It is this very preoccupation that both provided contested truths and then a scepticism for truth itself and for truth as a definite quality of knowledge. A key element of the last century has been the retreat from objective and absolute scientific truths to the conceptualisation of the truth teller and their truth claims. That in turn has revived a Greek notion of speaking truth to power - parrhesia - that exhorts truth telling in the face of the ownership of power and knowledge by institutions and elites.

This discussion will explore truth, post-truth and speaking truth to power as different approaches to thinking about what truth might be, both thinking about research in postgraduate degrees and the wider sense of contributing to knowledge in society.

18 October 2017

The Practice of Social Research

09.00 – 10.30

The researcher trains to develop their question, make decisions about the methods they use and the sources of information they draw their data from, and develop their research design to yield meaningful data from which to develop findings. Data is collected, collated and then analysis takes place.

This is the practice of social research, and the central activities that constitute the research process. It is important that researchers understand both the sequence of practices and how they develop a coherent design that can then be operationalised by the researcher. The extent to which this design and operationalisation is done effectively will often determine the value and effectiveness of the research. This session will explore issues around the practice of social research, mapping the process and exploring the key components
Context

10.30 – 12.00

Following on from the discussion of text, it is important to consider context. Any text or artefact comes from a specific time and place, but to state that your approach is ‘contextual’ is too broad and has little precise meaning. Text, meaning and context are multifaceted and multi-layered in their relationships and are perspective-dependent. Recognition of these complex associations is necessary in understanding the nature of history and culture. This session will consider what is meant by context and the implications of a range of contexts, including social, historical, and political, that may have an impact upon your study.

Data Collection and Sampling Approaches

15.00 – 16.30

Fundamental to the design of a robust experiment is an understanding of the range of data that can be collected in the discipline and the type of data that should be collected to address the question being tested. This session will explore various types of data (qualitative, semi-quantitative, quantitative), handling of this data and the influence of data type on analytical approaches, interpretation and conclusions.

01 November 2017

What does Social Research Find Out? The Resources of Critique

09.00 – 10.30

The assumption that social science, and the use of social science methods, produces knowledge underpins scientific methods, whether positivist or interpretivist. There are, however, critical perspectives that problematise the nature of the knowledge that is produced and the way in which that knowledge is produced and used. Whether reflecting the identity or world-view of the researcher, the assumptions of research design or the way in which the research process is conceptualised, critical perspectives open insight to what research does, what it finds out and for what purpose.

This session will explore how critical perspectives have raised critical questions in social research and led to key developments on who is researched, how they are researched, for what purpose and with what outcomes - ranging from emancipatory outcomes to condemnation of power relationships and the complexities underlying apparently visible and observable, researchable social problems.

Evidence/Archives

10.30 – 12.00

This session will focus on how you will develop and support your research as your project progresses. We will discuss a range of resources and facilities available to you
in print and in various electronic formats through Edge Hill Learning Services and beyond. Importantly, we will reflect critically upon the processes by which sources and evidence are selected, presented and employed. We will also explore the potential benefits of archival research. Finally, and this will be followed up in your supervision sessions, you will be encouraged to consider how the issues discussed relate to your own research.

Scientific Communication

15.00 – 16.30

Effectively communicating the importance of your research and its findings within your field, to a broader scientific audience or to non-scientists, is key to your success as a researcher. This session will explore techniques to achieve a concise scientific style in various forms of communication, including proposal writing, publication, and presentation. It will also discuss how to identify the appropriate outlets for science communication and discuss the publication and peer review process.

On Methods, Methodology and Research: Science, Discipline or Mess? A Critical Discussion

17.00 – 19.00

A key element of academic study - and particularly academic research and research degrees - is the ability to understand methodology and design methods to produce data that can be used as evidence and positions for argument. The development of scientific studies from enlightenment philosophy through to the development of the modern social and natural sciences. In the late 18th and early 19th century, scientific approaches with rigorous scientific methods and methodologies were considered the means by which objective knowledge could be produced. The 20th century saw the development of a more sophisticated notion of scientific methods, that recognised different disciplines and interdisciplinary fields yielded different forms of knowledge, some of which made objective claims, some of which recognised subjectivities, but all of which claimed that methods and methodology were of crucial importance in the development of recognised and coherent bodies of knowledge.

More recently, some philosophers and critics across the disciplines have claimed the assumption of logical methods and methodologies masks the 'mess' that is claiming to produce meaningful knowledge, and acknowledging the 'mess' is the beginning of a more egalitarian and democratic society - taken out of the hands of those who follow orthodoxies. This raises important questions for the academic: how should we respond to claims that method disciplines rather than produces knowledge within different disciplines?: What does it mean to accept the arguments that the claims for the importance of logical methods and methodology are exaggerated?: How do we respond to arguments that we are simply propagating orthodoxies, and this masks 'mess' as method?
15 November 2017

Facts, Evidence, Data

09.00 – 10.30

Most research produces information. It is the result of our thinking, or our use of research methods, or our engagement with different communities or populations. The information generated is used to describe, to analyse, to evaluate and to argue. Yet the world is full of information. What is significant and what is not? How do we conceptualise this information? As information? As data? As evidence? As facts? And what is the difference between these different conceptualisations?

Since the information you collect and collate is a central part of your research, these sorts of questions are of some importance to you understanding both your own research and what research yields and in part is for when it produces knowledge. This session will look at this product and explore the questions it raises as to its status, meaning and distinctions.

Identities

10.30 – 12.00

Stuart Hall explained 'identity' as referring 'to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us' (1996: 5–6). Identity and subjectivity underpins many of the projects you are undertaking. Many of you will be considering how identities are constructed or recorded, how they shift and how they are impacted upon by contexts. Who we are, how we describe ourselves to others, and how own identity and perception influences and shapes our scholarship is perhaps less regularly considered. Today’s session will ask you to address your identity as an academic and researcher.

Communicating in Lay Terms

15.00 – 16.30

Building on the themes discussed in session 4, this session will explore the important skill of writing and communicating to non-scientists. The session will also explore mechanisms of outreach and promoting your research to the public and the wider scientific community.
The Roles and Responsibilities of the PGR Intellectual: A Critical Discussion

17.00 – 19.00

The intellectual began as an adjunct to the powerful, and intellectual work served the entertainment and administrative functions of the powerful. At the same time, it was around intellectuals that eruptions of opposition and criticism of the accepted wisdoms and powers gathered. The development of capitalist modernity saw the development of institutions and organisational structures requiring extensive expertise from intellectuals who specialised in their branches of knowledge, with academia the accepted locus for intellectual development.

From that point, there have been continuous debates between the idea of the intellectual as a servant of the state, capitalism and the powerful, or the intellectual as a necessary leader - whether democratic or autocratic, or as a critical independent thinker. What are the roles and responsibilities of the intellectual? What should determine how we conduct ourselves as intellectuals, and to what extent is one of the three models of the intellectual more persuasive than any other? Do we have an ethical responsibility to take a particular view of our skills and knowledge, or use it in a particular way? As academics and research postgraduates, how do these roles and responsibilities manifest upon us?

29 November 2017

Evaluating, Analysing and Arguing Social Research

09.00 – 10.30

The product of our research may describe a trend, development or phenomena, or provide an analysis or evaluation, or make an argument, or a combination of those different activities. This is both an activity that is enjoyable - using your research and making a case or finding - and also difficult and challenging - since it involves making judgements and bring together knowledge and evidence in particular ways that represent your thinking.

This session will explore how evaluations, analyses and arguments are made and assessed. It will explore both the issues around evaluating, analysing and arguing and the means by which these different activities and their products are understood in their scope and limitations

Practice

10.30 – 12.00

The Panel D overview after the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise acknowledged that practice is firmly embedded as an accepted mode of research. However, it also noted that there were inconsistencies in the understanding of practice
as research. The term ‘practice as research’ has been employed to establish a space for arts practice in academic environments, and it therefore refers to a broad range of research activity. It can refer to a research process that leads to an arts-related output, an arts project as one element of a research process drawing on a range of methods, or a research process entirely framed as artistic practice. Practice as research is therefore not a ‘method’ in itself as it draws upon a variety of methodologies that might be incorporated into interdisciplinary research projects. This session will address questions circulating practice as research and associated discussions by drawing on the experience of practitioners working within the university.

The Funding Landscape in the Sciences

15.00 – 16.30

Funding opportunities in the Sciences exist for all career stages, from small grants to support graduate conference attendance to large scale grants supporting postdoctoral research. It is essential to gain an early understanding of the relevant funding opportunities available in your field in the short term but also those open to you in your next career stage. This session will explore the funding landscape for Science in the UK and internationally, the various mechanisms for finding funding bids, and how to plan small grant proposals.

6 December 2017

The Uses and Abuses of Research: Between Game Playing, Pure Knowledge and Applications: A Critical Discussion

17.00 – 19.00

Generally speaking, the studies engaged with by research postgraduates are valued not just for their knowledge but as research training. Likewise, research is regarded as either having value as ‘pure knowledge’ for itself, or more recently and for the majority of research, valued for its applications? This is partly manifest in the REF, where impact as deemed important as well as the ranking of research for itself. Whilst all academics are clear on the value of their work, and many would argue their work has important applications, there is also a sense in which research production is part of an elaborate research game, in which the research communities perpetuate themselves as much as add to value. Discussions around these different approaches and understandings of research raise important questions about how the research we do is valued and how we should understand what research is for.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RDF Domain</th>
<th>Workshop title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1: Working with others</td>
<td>Athena SWAN Gender Charter</td>
<td>25/04/2018</td>
<td>16:00 - 17:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>C3: Finances, funding &amp; resources</td>
<td>Bid writing 1: Understanding full Economic Costing (TEC) for research and other external activity</td>
<td>30/01/2018</td>
<td>16:00 - 17:00</td>
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<td>C3: Finances, funding &amp; resources</td>
<td>Bid Writing 2: Writing for a Lay Audience</td>
<td>06/02/2018</td>
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<td>C3: Finances, funding &amp; resources</td>
<td>Bid Writing 4: Impact Planning</td>
<td>20/02/2018</td>
<td>15:00 - 16:30</td>
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<td>C3: Finances, funding &amp; resources</td>
<td>British Academy Small Grants Information session</td>
<td>28/02/2018</td>
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<td>D2: Communication &amp; Dissemination</td>
<td>Citation Metrics: Measure Your Influence</td>
<td>15/11/2017</td>
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<td>A1: Knowledge Base</td>
<td>Conducting Focus Group Research</td>
<td>08/02/2018</td>
<td>13:00 - 15:00</td>
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<td>A1: Knowledge Base</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis: A Practical Guide</td>
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<td>C2: Research Management</td>
<td>EHU Research Strategy and Code of Practice</td>
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<td>Equality and Diversity in Research</td>
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<td>D1: Working with others</td>
<td>Faster collaborative research writing without drafts</td>
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<td>Finding research funding: Research Professional</td>
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<td>D3: Engagement &amp; Impact</td>
<td>Impact evidence</td>
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<td>Nvivo 1: Introduction</td>
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Dates and times are subject to change.
Appendix 4: contact details

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