

Seeking registration of the research project

This guidance is intended to help students understand the process of research project registration, and what is expected of the proposal. Further details on the examination itself can be found in the [Research project registration guidance](#) (RO-GRA-01G), which is primarily aimed at the examination panel, and in the [Research Degree Regulations](#).

In the months following enrolment, you will work on your research project proposal, eventually seeking formal registration of your project.¹

As with most research degree matters, the process of seeking and obtaining project registration is fundamentally the same across all research degrees, although there are some differences according to the research degree on which you are enrolled:

	MRes	Professional doctorate	PhD ²
Word limit	5,000	15,000	15,000
Written submission?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Viva examination?⁴	No	Yes	Yes

Project registration submissions must be sent via e-mail to your faculty's research degree administrator and include a:

- [submission cover sheet](#) (RO-GRA-01F);
- research project proposal (*see below*);
- research project management plan, including a Gantt chart detailing the proposed timeline for the project up to completion;
- [research data management](#) (RDM) plan, explaining how you will store and manage your data during the project, and preserve it after completion to enable re-use by other researchers;

¹Your enrolment as a student may be called 'registration' by some departments as it involves you registering as a student. To avoid confusion, the term 'registration' will be used within this document only to refer to *project* registration.

²Deadlines shown are based on the standard entry date. If your enrolment date is not in autumn, please contact GraduateSchool@edgehill.ac.uk to check your deadline.

³Submissions must be provided no later than 23.59 on the deadline date.

⁴The viva will last approximately one hour. Vivas must take place before 28 February (full-time) or 31 May (part-time), based on the standard entry date. If a viva cannot take place in time, your supervisors should notify GraduateSchool@edgehill.ac.uk as soon as possible.

- learning and skills needs analysis, including the programme of related studies that you have designed with the assistance of your supervisor(s). The paperwork for this is department specific. Please speak to your supervisor or PGR contact.;
- a [confirmation of mandatory training attendance \(RO-GRA-22F\)](#) including, where necessary, details of suitable alternative activities undertaken when unable to attend the session (must be approved in advance by the Graduate School).

A late submission is automatically considered a second submission, removing the option of 'revise and resubmit for re-examination' from your examiners. If you do not meet your deadline, you will have 10 working days from the original deadline in which to submit.

The proposal

As students seeking to register a research project will be working in any of a range of academic disciplines, it would be unwise to try to give detailed guidance as to the content and structure of the research proposal. The specific content and structure of the document should be discussed with the supervisory team, as they will be able to make recommendations regarding the most suitable form for the proposal to take, given the academic discipline in which individual students are working.

There are, however, some general recommendations that can be made. One would normally expect the research proposal to address the following:

1. **An abstract outlining the design of the research:** you should provide this in the space provided on the submission cover sheet (RO-GRA-01F).
2. **A clear statement of the proposed contribution to knowledge that will be made by the work:** details should be in the proposal itself but should also be summarised in the abstract. In the case of the PhD and professional doctorate an independent, significant and original contribution is required. In the case of the MRes an independent, but not necessarily original, contribution is needed. In the case of the professional doctorate the original contribution to knowledge should be directly applicable within a profession.
3. **Relevant literature and the place of the proposed research within a body of existing work:** in designing research it is important to do so in light of existing work on the topic. The proposal should show a familiarity with relevant literature, the ability to critically evaluate that literature and the ability to identify gaps in existing research. It should not simply be a report on what others have said on the topic or the research that they have completed. Rather, it should show your ability to identify patterns in existing research, evaluate those as points of departure for new research, and place your proposed research within the context of that work.
4. **A clear statement of research questions and/or hypotheses:** the proposal should also indicate the relationship between each research question and the methods of data collection and analysis that have been designed to address them. Where appropriate, an indication of the relationships between the various research questions should be given. For example, there may be a primary question, elements of which may be addressed by tackling various subsidiary or ancillary questions. In addition, one might expect some discussion of how existing work in the relevant field relates to, and influences, the research questions or hypotheses.

5. **Critical analysis of competing theoretical positions relevant to the work**, and a rationale for the theoretical choices made in designing the research.
6. **Critical analysis of competing methodological and epistemological positions relevant to the work**, and a rationale for the methodological and epistemological choices made in designing the research.
7. **Articulation of the relevant conceptual framework, and critical analysis of conceptual issues relevant to the research**: a central differentiating feature between doctoral level work and research at lower levels is the emphasis on conceptual matters at doctoral level. Many of the problems faced by researchers, even those engaged in work that is principally empirical, are conceptual rather than empirical. A high level of conceptual sophistication is a major element in distinguishing research that makes an original contribution to knowledge from research that does not.
8. **Details of the methods of data collection and the nature of relevant data**, plus an account of the rationale for the choice of methods of data collection.
9. **Details of the methods of data analysis**, plus an account of the rationale for the choice of methods of data analysis.
10. Where appropriate, **details of the primary ethical issues raised by the design of the research, along with a discussion of how those issues might best be addressed**: you should prepare your submission for ethical approval while working on your research proposal, with the aim of submitting your application for ethical approval as soon as possible after submission of the proposal. For details of the procedure for gaining ethical approval you should seek advice from your supervisor. Successful registration of your project is subject to appropriate ethical approval and **no primary research can be conducted until such approval has been gained**.
11. Where appropriate, a **critical discussion of other issues relating to values that might be relevant to the research**, such as political issues that have a direct bearing on the work, or aesthetic issues that are of relevance.
12. **A discussion of practical issues**, such as any financial or resource requirements, or requirements for additional training on the part of the student, along with timescales and any health and safety issues.

Examination of the submission

The research project registration panel (examination panel) and format differ according to the research degree on which you are enrolled:

- **MRes**: your submission is assessed by a panel comprising your supervisor and one other suitably qualified member of staff. This is a paper-based assessment only.
- **PhD and professional doctorate**: your submission is assessed by a panel comprising one of your supervisors, a research active member of staff unconnected to your project, but with relevant subject expertise, and a viva chair. This paper-based assessment is followed by a viva examination.

Following the examination, the panel makes one of the following recommendations to the Graduate School Board of Studies:

1. The project should be registered for the research degree sought;
2. The project should not be registered at the present time but you should revise and resubmit the proposal for re-examination (with a viva for doctoral degrees);
3. Following a re-examination, the project should not be registered (which means your enrolment will be terminated by the Board); or
4. You should be considered under the University's malpractice regulations.

In the case of the PhD and the professional doctorate, the examination panel will assess the research proposal and performance in the viva. Both the proposal and the viva are assessed as a whole and the decision as to whether to recommend registration of the research project (a recommendation made by the examination panel to the Graduate School Board of Studies) is made on the basis of the quality of the proposal *and* the student's performance in the viva. In the case of the MRes, the recommendation to the Graduate School Board of Studies is made solely on the basis of consideration of the written submission.

Document updated 03 October 2023