

Guidance for Applicants

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Eligibility

You must possess:

- A good honours degree (upper 2nd class honours or higher)
- A masters level qualification is preferred for applicants to doctoral degrees
- If English is not your first language, or if you are from a country whose national language is not English, you will need to be able to demonstrate English language proficiency to a minimum standard of IELTS 7.0 (or any equivalent recognised by the University). The [International Office](#) can offer advice.
 - Further information about English Language requirements for applicants can be accessed [here](#).

Do I need to do an English test if I have a degree from a UK university?

Please click [here](#) to access the English Language guidance for GTA applicants.

What is the selection panel looking for?

At the point of shortlisting for interview we are looking for well designed, feasible, projects that are aligned with the research interests of members of staff that are qualified to supervise research students and have capacity to do so. We have to ensure that we have at least two members of staff able to supervise and two further members of staff who would be appropriate internal examiners. Following the guidance below in relation to the application form and the proposal and consulting appropriate staff (which should be done by initially contacting the relevant Graduate School Research Degree Contact named on the advertisement) is the best way to ensure that you make a strong application. There are limits on the number of candidates that can be shortlisted for interview in each subject area so the strength of the competition can lead to good applications being unsuccessful at this stage. If we think that an application should be considered in a different subject area from that indicated in your application, we will ensure it is considered in both areas.

At the point of interview we have already established that your proposed project is well designed, appears viable, proposes a suitable original contribution to knowledge, and seems to be something we could supervise and examine. The focus at interview moves to whether the panel feels that you are well equipped to complete the project in good time to achieve a successful outcome. That means that the panel wants to know whether you have the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities and temperament for doctoral research while also performing the duties of a Graduate Teaching Assistant. We make no direct assessment of teaching ability (you will not be asked to design a teaching session and deliver it), but you will be asked two or three questions about teaching during the interview. Generally, we take the view that as long as you do not display any difficulty explaining your research to us in a short (no more than ten minute) presentation, then we know how to train you to be a good teacher in higher education and that is sufficient for our purposes. That means that while having lots of teaching experience may be an advantage if all other things are equal, we don't regard it as compensating for weaknesses in relation to research. The primary goal of the GTA scheme is to recruit the strongest doctoral students to achieve timely, successful, completions, with an excellent student experience and development of your research and teaching skills, resulting in you becoming a very strong candidate for academic or related employment.

At the final selection panel the primary focus is on any additional institutional factors that have an influence on what would be the most appropriate way for the University to allocate the funding in order to achieve the maximum return on its investment. The desired return being timely, successful, completions, with an excellent student experience and employment destinations. In addition, the final selection panel will consider strategic developmental priorities in order to ensure consistent development across the University.

Application process

All GTA opportunities will be advertised on the Edge Hill Jobs University website [here](#). Applicants must complete the online application form via www.edgehill.ac.uk/jobs, and also attach five separate documents in the following order:

1. A 'Research Proposal' which should not exceed 2,000 words
2. A full academic curriculum vitae
3. Qualifications certificates
4. A scanned copy of your passport
5. IELTSs, or [equivalent](#), paperwork– click [here](#) to access the English Language requirements guidance (*international and EU applicants only*)

The research proposal

The research proposal should not exceed 2,000 words in length.

As students applying for a GTA studentship 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 prospective supervisors, as they will be able to make recommendations regarding the most suitable form for the proposal to take given the academic discipline in which you are working. There are, however, some general recommendations that can be made. We would normally expect the research proposal to include the following:

- An abstract of no more than 200 words outlining the design of the research, including 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. An independent, significant and original contribution is required at doctoral level. The abstract is in addition to the proposal and so does not count in relation to the word limit on the proposal.
- Some evidence of familiarity with 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.
- A clear statement of research questions and, where appropriate (but only where appropriate), 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.

- A rationale for any theoretical choices made in designing the research.
- A rationale for the methodological and epistemological choices made in designing the research.
- Evidence of some degree of awareness 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. While we would expect your proficiency with conceptual matters to develop during the course of doctoral study, being able to show some familiarity with conceptual issues relevant to your proposed project provides some advantage at the point of application.
- Where relevant, details of the methods of data collection and the nature of that data, plus an account of the rationale for the choice of those methods.
- Where relevant, details of the methods of data analysis, plus an account of the rationale for the choice of those methods.
- Where appropriate, brief discussion of the primary ethical issues raised by the design of the research, along with an indication of how those issues might best be addressed.
- 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 (e.g. Gantt chart) and any health and safety issues.

The interview

Interviews last for 40 minutes in total (including your presentation). Following introductions, you will be asked to give your presentation, then the members of the panel will each ask you a few questions. The primary focus of the questions will be on the research, but there will also be some questions about teaching and skills development (you should familiarise yourself with the [Researcher Development Framework](#) and the skills development agenda in doctoral education prior to interview).

It is very important that you keep your presentation to **no more than ten minutes**. We pay close attention to that because failing to do so demonstrates an inability to manage time and a disregard for the requirements. It also means that you will have less time in the interview to demonstrate to us that you are a suitable candidate. The interviews run to a tight schedule and we cannot extend any interview to allow us to complete our questions when a presentation has run over time.

It is important to realise that what we are particularly looking for is evidence that you are a rigorous thinker who understands what it is to design good research and so a good performance at interview is not a matter of defending your initial research design at all costs. It is better for the panel to see that you have recognised a problem and are thinking of solutions by identifying adjustments or alternatives to the design of the research than it is for the panel to have identified a problem and you to try to defend the design of the research in the face of that problem when that is really a lost cause. We are not looking for a perfectly designed project; research rarely proceeds exactly as it was initially designed, so our primary focus is on your potential for development, not necessarily on where you are now.

After the interview

The final selection panel will meet week following the end of the interview process to review all interviewed applicants. Successful applicants will be emailed with initial offer information from the Graduate School following the panel meeting normally with the opportunity to accept within 48 hours.

Other applicant questions (FAQs)

I am an international applicant – can I request an interview using video conferencing?

Video conferencing will be used for all interviews.

Will I receive feedback?

Due to the volume of applications we receive, feedback is not normally provided to applicants unless requested directly. All applicants will receive an application outcome direct to their email account provided at application.

How can I request reasonable adjustment in the application/interview process?

Please email graduateschooladmissions@edgehill.ac.uk in advance.