

Preparing to Study with UniSkills: Postgraduate (PGT) Toolkit

Landing page

Congratulations on choosing to **study at Edge Hill University**. However you are joining us, and whatever your academic journey so far, we really hope you enjoy exploring this toolkit. It has been designed to help **prepare you to study at postgraduate taught (PGT) level**, **introducing** you to **key academic skills** you will use and the **support** available from **UniSkills**.

We recommend completing this toolkit in the order it is presented, but **feel free to access however suits you best**. You will be able to **revisit this toolkit whenever you need** and there's no expectation to complete it all in one go, as [you will always be able to access it online](#).

Getting the most out of this toolkit

About this toolkit

As exciting as it can be to study at university we also recognise there can be lots of uncertainty when beginning a new adventure. This toolkit has been **designed for postgraduate taught (PGT) students** to help **build your confidence** with the **step up** from studying at undergraduate (UG) level. Explore expectations around your **advanced academic skills** and **independent learning**, and learn more about **what it's like to study at PGT level** at Edge Hill University.

Accessibility

As an Edge Hill student you'll be joining an incredibly **diverse learning community** and we are committed to ensuring an **equitable** and **inclusive** experience for all. This toolkit has been designed with accessibility in mind throughout, and **alternative formats** are available, to ensure that everyone can access the information they need.

If you are happy to continue exploring this interactive toolkit simply continue scrolling through each section. Alternatively, you can access the information from this toolkit in an accessible **Word** or **PDF** document.

How to navigate this toolkit

To really get the most out of your toolkit we recommend completing it in the order it's presented, however please **feel free to access however suits you best**. You can select the most relevant headings and even **search for keywords** using the magnifying glass in the top left corner of the **navigation menu**.

All the **information**, and **interactive elements**, in this toolkit are an **invitation for you to engage** and you can choose how much you want to explore. There's also no requirement to work through all the information in one go as this [toolkit will always be available for you](#) to revisit and review any of the support, whenever you need it.

This toolkit aims to:

1. Introduce **how you will study at PGT level** at Edge Hill University.
2. Explain the **key differences** between undergraduate and postgraduate study.
3. Offer **opportunities to reflect** on your unique learning journey.
4. Signpost you to further **academic skills support** from UniSkills.

This toolkit supports the following graduate attributes:

Resilience: Resilience is the **ability to recover quickly from setbacks**. It encompasses aspects of self-awareness, motivation and perspective.

Digital proficiency: Digital proficiency is about **confident** and **capable** use of digital tools and technologies. This includes your **ability to access information** and **use software**, as well as creating and sharing content and **communicating effectively online**.

Adaptability: Adaptability is an important skill to develop in our fast-paced and ever-changing world. Many experts predict that today's graduates could have 3+ careers and 15-20 roles in their working life, so the **ability to be flexible** and recognise **transferable skills** is an important career (and life) skill.

Critical thinking: Critical thinking is **your ability to discover, understand, critique, manage** and **absorb information**, and curate, copyright and disseminate knowledge to the wider community.

[You can learn more about graduate attributes and employability by visiting the Careers web pages.](#)

What is UniSkills?

Meet UniSkills

Hello, we are your Student Engagement team - you may come to know us more as [UniSkills](#)! We support all undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students in developing their academic skills.

Most of the team you'll work with are **Academic Skills Advisors**, who can help you build your academic skills and confidence throughout your time at Edge Hill University.

*Although you are expected to start PGT study with **foundational academic skills** you will have **opportunity** and **support** to help you **develop** and **build on** these throughout your student journey.*

Welcome to your preparing to study toolkit

Everyone arrives at Edge Hill with their own level of skills and abilities and **you are not expected to know everything when you arrive**. All of the topics you will explore in this toolkit can be **developed through practice** and there is **lots of support available** to help you along the way.

Remember, you don't need to complete everything at once and there are no tests or grades. Take your time, **explore what feels useful**, and you can revisit this toolkit whenever you need.

Play the welcome video below to **meet your Academic Skills Advisor, Adam**, as he introduces you to this toolkit.

[Play 'Welcome to your Preparing to Study with UniSkills Toolkit: Undergraduate' video.](#)

Video Transcript

Hi, I'm Adam, I'm an Academic Skills Advisor with the Student Engagement team at Edge Hill University. Together with my colleagues, I deliver UniSkills academic skills support for both undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. This Preparing to Study Toolkit has been designed to support you, as a postgraduate taught student, whether you are new to Edge Hill, continuing your educational journey direct from undergraduate study, or even if you are returning to learning after a break in education. This toolkit focuses on helping you get ready for the transition to postgraduate level study and clarifies the foundational academic skills you'll need to develop or perhaps refresh. It also signposts you to our more in-depth and specific toolkits, online resources and services, should you wish to explore further at your own pace. On behalf of UniSkills, I hope you find this toolkit useful, reassuring and supportive.

Reflecting on your existing skills

At postgraduate taught (PGT) level it is not just your subject content that changes, the **expectations of how you study and learn** often change too. In this section of the toolkit you are invited to **reflect on your existing academic skills** and think about how you'd like to **develop** and **progress** in your PGT studies.

*Self-reflection can help you take ownership of your learning to **recognise** what you already know, **identify** what you want to improve and **acknowledge** your progress.*

Where are you now?

You may already have some of the academic skills needed for PGT study, as well as an idea of what your transition will involve, but a **good foundation in any journey is to consider how you are arriving**.

Activity: Read and consider your response to the following reflective questions.

How have you arrived?

- **Think about how you are starting university.** Are you joining direct from undergraduate (UG) study, returning to learning after a break or a different educational route, or perhaps you are entering PGT study through your workplace?

What are your existing skills?

- **Think about your current level of academic skills.** Reflecting on the academic skills you already possess, and how confident you feel using them, can be a great way to recognise your strengths and identify where you would benefit from a refresher.

How do you learn?

- **Think about how you learn.** Reflecting on your approach to learning, such as your study routines, time management and methods for tackling assessments, can help you identify what has worked well in the past (continue) and what could be improved for your future (adapt). This process is known as **metacognition**: thinking about how you learn.

Time to reflect

Activity: Consider the academic skills listed below and make a note of those you feel most confident with or have had previous experience of using during your undergraduate studies.

- Planning and being organised
- Finding academic information
- Reading academic literature
- Critical thinking
- Analysing sources
- Evaluating sources
- Paraphrasing information from sources
- Summarising information
- Synthesising sources
- Constructing an argument
- Referencing sources
- Writing literature reviews
- Writing long essays and assignments

Make a note of the skills you have checked and, perhaps more importantly, the ones you have *not* checked, to refer back to as you progress through this toolkit. You'll learn more about these skills and may even recognise you've more than you first thought!

Where do you want to go next?

At PGT level you'll **build** on your UG skills, but expectations often shift towards **greater depth, independence** and **confidence** in handling **complexity**. You will also have opportunity to develop your academic skills further in areas such as:

- **Research skills** - planning a search strategy or using databases effectively.
- **Critical thinking** - evaluating arguments and analysing evidence.
- **Problem solving and adaptability** - refining your approach in response to findings or feedback.
- **Presenting and communicating** - sharing your ideas with different audiences.

The good news is there's lots of support available at Edge Hill, from your academic tutors and [UniSkills](#), to help you on your student journey.

How you will study at PGT level

Studying at postgraduate taught (PGT) level is different to learning at undergraduate (UG) and **understanding how you'll learn** can help you feel **prepared** and **empowered**.

In this section of the toolkit you can learn more about the **differences between UG and PGT study**, explore some **skills you can strengthen**, and **refresh your understanding** of key university terminology.

*Your **module** or **year of study handbook** should explain how you will be **taught and assessed**, and you can always **ask your tutors** for any further **guidance**.*

Studying at Edge Hill University

At Edge Hill University we're proud of our **diverse student population** and your arrival contributes to the Edge Hill student community. As a PGT student, you might be joining us direct from **UG study** or **returning to learning** after a break. Maybe you're an **international** student studying in the UK or **remotely**. Or perhaps you're studying **part-time**, alongside other commitments, developing your skills through **work-based learning** or **continuing professional development** (CPD).

However you arrive, you'll quickly discover PGT study expects you to bring with you a **good level of pre-existing skills and knowledge** from your previous study experiences.

Studying at PGT level

Understanding the **differences between UG and PGT study** is key to preparing for the next stage of your academic journey. While both levels build knowledge and skills, they **differ in depth, independence and expectations**. The table below highlights some of the key distinctions to help you compare what studying at each level broadly involves and what will be expected from you.

Studying at UG Levels 3-6	Studying at PGT Level 7
Build a broad understanding across a subject.	Specialise deeply in one subject area .
Learn key theories and foundational concepts.	Develop advanced knowledge of theories and principles .
Introduced to basic methods and approaches .	Apply specialised methods, techniques or frameworks .
Develop and practice critical thinking skills.	Demonstrate high-level critical analysis .
Apply knowledge to structured or guided tasks.	Apply knowledge to complex problems.
Complete guided research with support.	Conduct independent research .
Complete smaller assignments or projects .	Undertake complex assignments or large research projects .
Explore and identify areas of interest .	Develop expertise in a specific field.
Receive more structured guidance and support .	Work with high independence and self-direction .
Follow a more structured timetable .	Manage your own time and learning.

Time management

Time management is a key academic skill to further develop at PGT level because the **pace** and **expectations** are **higher**, and you'll often have **more responsibility** for planning your own reading, research and assessed work.

Managing your time effectively can help you keep on top of **multiple deadlines**, break **large projects** into manageable chunks and successfully coordinate regular **study time** alongside

other responsibilities. This can help you work more consistently and help reduce last minute pressures.

Featuring useful time management resources, apps and advice on staying motivated, your [Time Management Toolkit](#) can help you fine tune your time management skills.

Note-making

Note-making is another key skill you can refine at PGT level because you'll be working with **more complex reading** and **ideas**, and you'll need to use what you read to **build your own critical arguments**.

Effective note-making can help you **capture key concepts, evidence**, ideas you agree or disagree with, as well as your own **questions** and **comparisons**. Notes also make it easier to **synthesise ideas** (build connections between multiple sources), plan assignments and keep track of where your ideas come from. Note-making can also support **good academic practice** and help with your referencing when you start to write.

Finding the right note-making strategy for you can take time and practice but your [Note-making Toolkit](#) is a great place to start.

Group work

Group work can also be a key part of your PGT studies as you're often expected to **collaborate** in more **purposeful** and **professional** ways. Sharing expertise, tackling complex tasks and producing work that reflects real academic or workplace practice, in addition to developing your own learning community and professional network of peers.

At PGT level, group work can also help you **test ideas**, learn and share **different perspectives** and experiences, and further develop skills in **communication, negotiation** and **project planning**. You can learn more about collaboration and collusion, as well as working independently and with integrity, in your [Academic Integrity Toolkit](#).

Feedback

Another important way you'll continue to learn at PGT level is through your feedback, as you're often asked to **demonstrate how your critical thinking is developing**. Engaging with your feedback can help you **identify patterns** in your **strengths** and **areas for development**,

allowing you to make informed changes to your approach before your next deadline or assessment.

At PGT level, feedback isn't just about your grade. You can make good use of the accompanying feedback to help you improve your academic **skills**, refine your **arguments** and work more **confidently** and **independently**.

How you receive feedback may vary depending on what programme you're studying, and it can be communicated to you as **written**, **verbal**, or even **audio** feedback. There are generally two types of feedback you will receive - **formative** and **summative**. You can learn more about **why feedback matters**, how to identify **common themes** and how to **turn your feedback into achievable actions** in your [Focus On Feedback Toolkit](#).

Glossary

As a PGT student, you may already be familiar with lots of **words** and **terminology** used at university. We've translated some key university-specific language into an interactive glossary for you to check, or refresh, your understanding. Edge Hill also provides [University Terminology Explained](#), which features a **glossary of basic terms** related to university and higher education.

Activity: Read the glossary below to learn more about definitions of key words and terminology that may be new or unfamiliar to you.

Key words	Definition
Lectures	Learning in a group or large cohort from a lecturer in a lecture theatre or classroom.
Seminars	In seminars you'll learn through discussion with your peers (other students on your course) and an academic.
Tutorials	Tutorials are individual or small group discussions with a tutor and/or your peers.
Workshops	In workshops you'll learn through practical work relevant to your programme of study.
Lab or field work	Using specialised equipment, learning technical skills and applying

Key words	Definition
	theory through laboratory (lab) or practice in the field .
Placements	On placements , you'll learn through planned periods of professional work and reflection relevant to your programme.
Group work	Learning with peers through shared group tasks, projects and assessments.
Peers	Peers are other students studying on your course, in your year and across the wider university. They are often considered your academic equals and can offer a great social and academic support system.
Coursework	Coursework covers a wide variety of assignment types including essays, reports, presentations, and more.
Exams	Assessment through traditional unseen exams , seen exams, or online time limited assessments.
Academic journal	Academic journals are specialist publications focused on specific disciplines and aimed at researchers, academics, professionals, and students.
Journal articles	Journal articles (also called academic or research papers) are the main content of academic journals.
Collusion	Academic collusion is when you work together or share answers on assessed work that should be completed independently.
Paraphrasing	Paraphrasing is taking someone else's idea and rewriting it in your own words. You still need to reference your source, even though the wording is yours.
Citing	Citing (or a citation) means referencing where your information has come from by giving credit to the original author or source letting your reader know whose ideas you are using and where they can find them.
Formative feedback	Formative feedback is feedback <i>for</i> your learning and focuses on your development. It is provided <i>before</i> your final submission, typically supports your learning, is often ungraded and allows you to make further changes before your final deadline.
Summative feedback	Summative feedback is feedback <i>of</i> your learning and focuses on your final grade or outcome. It is provided <i>after</i> your final submission, is typically based on your Learning Outcomes and highlights your strengths and areas for improvement before your next submission.

Key words	Definition
Synthesising	Synthesising means bringing together ideas from multiple authors and/or sources to identify connections, compare perspectives and develop your own informed understanding or argument.
Primary source	A primary source gives you direct access to the original material or evidence, allowing you to form your own interpretation. It has not been interpreted, analysed, or summarised by others. Examples include: original research articles or reports; interviews or survey data; official documents; and diaries, letters or emails.
Secondary source	A secondary source is someone else's interpretation or explanation of the original material, helping you understand and evaluate the topic. It does not present new, first-hand evidence but instead explains or discusses existing information. Examples include: textbooks; journal articles that analyse other studies; essays or commentaries; documentaries that interpret events; and biographies.

Digital skills for your studies

Starting postgraduate taught (PGT) study means engaging with a range of **digital systems**. The good news is many of the digital skills you'll use at university **may be familiar from previous study** experiences, or something you **already do in everyday life**. Like finding information online, working on digital documents, sending emails or using online learning platforms. In this section of the toolkit you can explore **key digital systems** you'll use as an Edge Hill student, **what you'll use them for** and **where to find help and support**.

*Engaging with **digital platforms and systems**, including toolkits like this, all help develop your digital skills.*

What are digital skills?

Digital skills are a core part of your university life. You'll use **technology** every day, sometimes without even realising, to **learn, communicate, stay organised** and **complete your studies**.

Edge Hill University | UniSkills Toolkit Alternative Format

From accessing your virtual learning environment to writing assignments, joining online sessions and managing digital files, **developing your digital skills can help you study more confidently and independently.** Not everything you do at university is digital but recognising what skills you already have can help you identify others you might want to develop further.

When will I use digital skills?

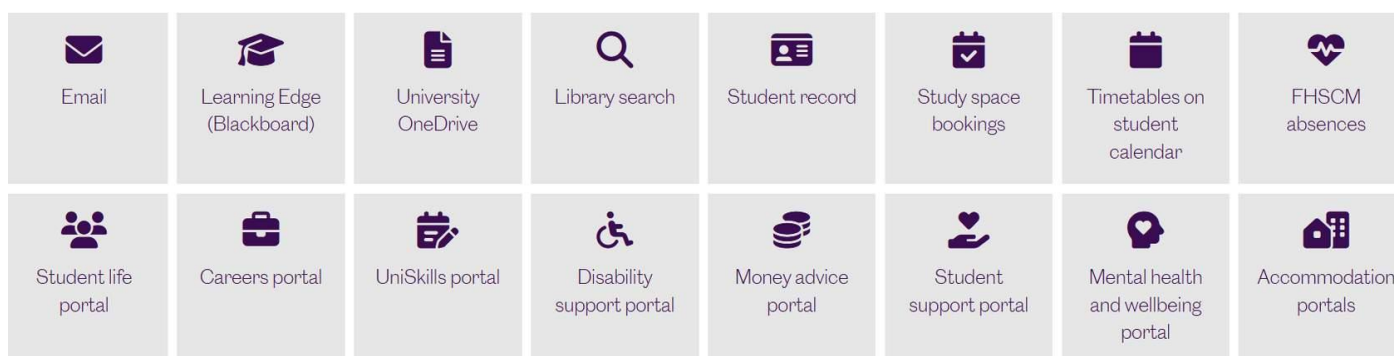
When you first start university, there are a few **key digital tasks you'll need to complete**, such as logging on to University systems, setting up your account security and connecting to Wi-Fi. Explore the tabs below to learn more about some of the **digital skills** you'll need when starting at Edge Hill University:

STUDENT HOMEPAGE

Digital skills: *Exploring and navigating the university website and your student portals.*

Your [Student Homepage](#) is a great starting point as a gateway to lots of information that you may need during your first few weeks and months at University. It provides **access to key University systems, support services and important messages** throughout the academic year. You can also **access your student portals** from this page.

Whilst the main structure and layout of the student homepage largely remains the same, some content on this page changes depending on the time of year or events and initiatives happening, so it's **always a topical place to explore!**



WI-FI

Digital skills: *Connecting to the university Wi-Fi.*

As an Edge Hill student you can **access free [eduroam wireless network](#)** from your **phone, tablet or computer** for secure access to the internet and other online services.

Edge Hill University | UniSkills Toolkit Alternative Format

You can connect to eduroam in the list of wireless networks on your device and log in when prompted using your:

- **Username:** username@edgehill.ac.uk
- **Password:** your unique university password

If you need any help connecting your device to eduroam you can [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#) for further support.

ACCOUNT SECURITY

Digital skills: *Changing your password and protecting your personal information.*

You will be provided with an Edge Hill username (also known as your **student number**) and **password** during your enrolment. To keep your Edge Hill network account secure you will be automatically prompted to **reset your password every 180 days**. If you forget your password or want to change it for any reason you can [initiate a password reset](#) at any time.

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) adds **extra layer of security** to your account by prompting you to confirm it's really you when you sign in. After entering your password, you'll approve a notification or enter a code sent to your phone. You are **required to set up MFA** to access University systems, and you can register by following a simple [step-by-step guide on the MFA Registration web page](#).

If you need any help resetting your password or registering for MFA you can [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#) for further support.

LAPTOP LOANS

Digital skills: *Loaning a laptop and using a networked device.*

Catalyst has **over 100 laptops you can borrow***, as well as **over 350 networked PCs** that are **accessible 24/7** during term time. All devices provide access to the University network and online file storage, including most software available from the University.

Laptops are self-issued using your library account and can be found in the lockers on the ground floor of Catalyst. You will need your UniCard to issue or return a laptop.

Edge Hill University | UniSkills Toolkit Alternative Format

There are two laptop loan lengths available:

- **24-hour loan laptop:** For use on campus only, these laptops are not issued with a charger and will not work off campus.
- **2-week loan laptop:** For use on and off campus, you will need to pick up a charger and bag from the Catalyst Helpdesk.

We understand there are lots of circumstances where overnight and two-week loans will not be sufficient and in these cases you can [apply for a semester loan laptop](#).

*[*Terms and conditions apply](#) and all laptop loans and PCs are subject to availability.*

Edge Hill University digital systems

Studying at Edge Hill University requires you to engage with several different digital systems, each with its own purpose. It can **take time to get used to which system does what**, and that's completely normal.

Explore the tabs below to learn more about the main systems you'll use for **learning, creating coursework** and **storing your files**. The focus is on understanding how these tools fit into your studies, not on becoming an expert straight away.

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Your **virtual learning environment (VLE)** is more commonly called **Learning Edge or Blackboard**. On your VLE you'll find your course and module areas related to your programme of study, along with links to a range of other useful resources.

The [Learning Edge \(Blackboard\): Getting Started guide](#) is a **useful beginner's introduction** to accessing and finding your way around your VLE. You can also [explore video tutorials, refresher guides and tips](#) to get the most out of your VLE on topics such as:

- Logging in to your VLE.
- Finding your course and module area.
- Exploring your organisations.
- Navigating your learning and teaching content.
- Useful module tools.

MICROSOFT OFFICE

[Office 365](#) is a cloud hosted service provided by Microsoft. It allows you to **create, edit, manage** and even **collaborate**. You can [download Microsoft Office 365 for free](#) on up to **five personal devices** as well as access to online versions of Office 365 products and OneDrive storage. Office 365 includes Word, Excel, Outlook, Access, PowerPoint, OneNote, Publisher and MS Teams.

To access Office 365, you will need your:

- **Username:** username@edgehill.ac.uk
- **Password:** your unique university password

OUTLOOK EMAIL

The Edge Hill University email platform is **Outlook via Microsoft 365**. Outlook also includes helpful tools like **folders, flags** and a **built-in calendar** to keep you organised. You can **access your email on any device** through the web, desktop or mobile app, making it easy to stay connected wherever you are.

To access Outlook email, you will need your:

- **Username:** username@edgehill.ac.uk
- **Password:** your unique university password

We **recommend you check your student email account daily** as this is the main way the university will communicate with you about your course, events and support.

ONEDRIVE

[University OneDrive](#) is your **personal cloud storage space** where you can save, organise and access your files from any device. It automatically backs up your work, keeping it safe and makes it easy to switch between campus computers, your laptop, or even your phone.

You can also **share documents** with course mates, **collaborate** in real time and keep everything organised in **one secure place** connected to your university account. If you ever lose a device, your files are still **safely stored** online and ready to access.

Accessibility and inclusive learning

From proofreading and note-making, to planning your written work, **technologies can support you** to develop effective study strategies. [Assistive technologies](#) are **available to all students** and can be **useful tools to support your learning**.

You can explore your [Assistive and Accessible Technologies Toolkit](#) to learn more about tools like Mind Mapping, Text-to-Speech software and other accessibility apps, and there are further **accessibility features** available to you in Office 365 and Blackboard, including:

Microsoft Office offers several features to support reading, writing and presenting:

- **Immersive Reader** helps you focus on text by adjusting spacing, colour and reading aloud.
- **Editor** provides advanced spelling, grammar and clarity suggestions to support your writing.
- **Dictate and Transcribe** let you speak instead of typing, or upload audio to convert speech into text.
- **PowerPoint Rehearse with Coach** provides feedback on your presentation skills, including pacing, clarity and use of filler words.

Access further support with [Microsoft Office 365 accessibility features](#).

Blackboard Ally supports accessibility when accessing your learning materials online:

- **Alternative Formats** allow you to download files in different formats, such as audio, ePub, or HTML, depending on your needs.
- **Accessibility Checker** highlights where documents may have barriers and provides guidance on accessibility, helping ensure materials are inclusive for everyone.

You can [download alternative formats of content in Blackboard](#) by using the Ally feature.

Recognising how **accessibility benefits everyone** can help you identify simple ways to make your digital communications **clearer**, more **usable** and **inclusive for everyone**. As you continue working with digital tools and materials, keeping accessibility in mind will support not only your own learning but also the wider university community. It is also a **great transferable skill** to take with you into the workplace.

Activity: Read the accessibility statements below and tick whether you think they are true or false.

Statement	True	False
Accessible content benefits all students		
Accessibility tools are only for students with disabilities		
Alternative formats help you learn in the way that suits you best		
Accessibility takes too much time, so it's better to skip it		
Tools like Immersive Reader and Ally help you check and improve accessibility		
Accessibility only matters for academic work		
Accessibility creates a more inclusive learning experience for all		
If a document looks fine on my screen, it will be accessible to everyone		
Headings and structure help screen readers and improve navigation for everyone		
Videos do not need captions if the audio is clear enough to hear		

Digital skills support

The university offers a range of **support** through **resources** and **short courses** to help you build your **confidence, independence** and **digital skills at your own pace**:

[Digital Skills web pages](#)

Explore a range of self-help guides and video tutorials covering essential platforms and tasks to support your studies.

[LinkedIn Learning](#)

Edge Hill students have full, free access to thousands of high-quality online courses and video tutorials written by industry experts.

[Ask Us @ Catalyst](#)

If you need help with your digital skills, or have any questions about using university systems, you can contact the Catalyst Helpdesk.

[UniSkills Campaigns](#)

Access targeted support, created and delivered in collaboration with other specialist support, for help settling in, finding a happy study life balance, acing your assessments and much more!

Research and reading skills

As a postgraduate taught (PGT) student, planning time for **research** and **reading** is even more important. You will use your reading to **identify key themes** and issues, and to select and **critically evaluate evidence** to support a clear and **justified position** in your argument.

In this section of the toolkit you can learn more about the differences between **researching at undergraduate (UG) versus PGT level**, developing a **research strategy** and the **importance of academic reading**.

*Your approach to **research** and **reading** will **deepen at PGT level** and, with time, practice and support, your **confidence in critical analysis** and **applying evidence** will grow.*

What is academic information?

In a world of information overload, **learning to recognise high quality academic information is an essential research skill**. At PGT level, the expectations of your research become more advanced, requiring you to **engage critically with complex ideas, debates** and **methodologies** within your discipline.

Your **research is guided by your assessment questions and learning outcomes**, but also involves **independently identifying key themes**, gaps and perspectives in the literature. This

means moving beyond simply finding information to **systematically searching** academic databases, **evaluating sources** in relation to their credibility and relevance, and **synthesising evidence** to support a well-reasoned and **academically robust argument**.

As a PGT student, you will use a wide range of sources, which may differ depending on your subject discipline, but all should be **relevant, reliable** and **academically appropriate**.

Researching at PGT level

While many of the research skills you developed at UG level still apply, expectations at PGT level place **greater emphasis on depth, independence** and **critical judgement**. The table below highlights some key differences between research and reading at UG versus PGT level.

Researching at UG Levels 3-6	Researching at PGT Level 7
Focuses on building core research and reading skills and developing subject knowledge.	Builds on existing skills with stronger focus on depth, independence and specialist knowledge.
Reading focuses on understanding key ideas and demonstrating knowledge of a topic.	Reading critically interrogates ideas, evaluates evidence and shapes arguments .
Usually uses a guided reading list and smaller, more defined set of sources.	Expected to use a broader and more diverse range of sources , often identified independently.
Emphasis on describing and explaining theories, concepts and evidence and comparing viewpoints.	Emphasis on analysing, synthesising and critically evaluating sources and perspectives in depth.
Research tasks are usually shorter , more structured and follow clear guidance .	Research is longer, more self-directed and requires coherent design and project management .
Contributes to your academic development and develops your role as a learner .	Contributes to academic or professional knowledge and your role shaping research outcomes .

Research strategies

As a PGT student, you may have encountered research in different ways before, through previous study or professional experiences, so some research skills may feel familiar. The following simplified research process is a **useful refresher** of a **basic research strategy**, broken down into the four key stages. At **PGT level**, each of these stages involves **greater independence** and **depth**, as you:

1. **Identify** and refine your focus.
2. **Find** and search more strategically across specialist sources.
3. Critically **evaluate** the quality and relevance of your sources.
4. **Apply** evidence to build and justify clear academic or professional arguments.

How do I find academic information?

A simplified research process can be broken down into four key stages: *Identify*, *Find*, *Evaluate* and *Apply*. Read on to learn more about each of these four research stages.

Stage 1: Identify

The first stage of any research process should be to **clearly identify what you need to find out**.

Useful tips:

- **Analyse** your assignment question to understand what you are being asked to do.
- **Identify** your keywords and topics from the question or your learning outcomes.
- **Reflect** on what you already know and identify any gaps in your knowledge.
- **Use your keywords** to search for recommended reading from your reading list.

By taking time at the start of your research process to identify keywords and gaps in your knowledge you can help avoid wasting time or conducting unfocussed searches.

Stage 2: Find

At university level of study you will be expected to use **high-quality academic resources**, such as peer reviewed journal articles, so knowing **how to find them** is a key skill.

Useful tips:

- Use your [Reading List Online](#) to find essential and recommended reading from your tutors.
- Use [Discover More](#) to search the University Library's collection of resources.
- Use your [Subject Resources](#) to conduct wider research in your field of study.
- **Make notes** as you read to help you process and develop your understanding.

Keeping a **list of your resources** as you find and use them can **help demonstrate you've carried out appropriate research**, as well as help you articulate the information you find. It can also help when it comes time to create your **reference list**.

Stage 3: Evaluate

Once you have found your information, you will need to **evaluate** it to determine how accurate, reliable, trustworthy and current it is. Developing **critical thinking skills** takes practice but really helps ensure your academic work is based on credible evidence.

Useful tips:

- **Check** the information is accurate and from a reliable source.
- **Consider** who created the source, what is their expertise or authority.
- **Be cautious** with [Generative Artificial Intelligence \(GenAI\)](#) tools.
- **Always follow your tutor's guidance.**

Stage 4: Apply

Once you've found and evaluated all your reliable information, you'll need to **read it** and **organise it** to make the best use of it. Different strategies work for different people, but there's plenty of support to help you find what works best for you in the following [UniSkills Toolkits](#):

- [Academic Reading Toolkit](#) - for strategies to extract useful information from sources.
- [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) - for support with planning, structuring and drafting.

Summary

You have just explored a simplified example of a research process. You will strengthen your research skills and confidence over time and with practice, and there's lots of support available to help you.

A great place to start exploring and developing your research skills is with your [Finding Academic Information Toolkit](#).

What is academic reading?

As a PGT student you are hopefully familiar with the skill of academic reading, as it is an **essential part of your research process**. Although reading is usually carried out in advance of writing, and should be carefully factored into your planning time, it will continue to shape your thinking throughout the research and drafting process.

Why is academic reading important at PGT level?

Academic reading is central to PGT study and usually accounts for the largest part of your self-directed learning time. Reading at PGT level is not only about **understanding ideas**, but using them to **develop a clear, evidence-informed position** in your arguments. At PGT level, reading involves depth of inquiry and you are expected to:

- **Engage** actively with a **wide range of academic resources**.
- **Interrogate arguments**.
- **Evaluate** the **strength** and **relevance** of evidence.
- **Consider implications** for your topic, practice or discipline.

Academic reading can help you **identify key themes**, debates and gaps, allowing you to **synthesise ideas** by making informed connections across your sources. You will select sources **strategically** and **critically**, appraising their **credibility, methodology** and **usefulness**. This can help you justify your claims, **strengthen your analysis** and reach **well-supported conclusions**.

You can find lots of useful research and reading strategies and support by exploring the following [UniSkills Toolkits](#):

- [Dissertations and Research Projects Toolkit](#)
- [Conducting a Literature Review Toolkit](#)
- [Academic Resilience Toolkit](#)

PGT research often evolves as your understanding develops and it's normal for your project to change direction in response to reading, data or feedback. This reflects deeper engagement rather than identifying a problem. Remaining adaptable, by revisiting your research question and approach, can improve the clarity and impact of your work.

Check your learning

Activity: Read the statements below and tick whether you think they are an expectation for research and reading at UG or PGT level.

Statement	UG	PGT
1. Focuses on building subject knowledge through guided reading		
2. Relies mainly on recommended reading lists and core sources		
3. Uses reading to identify gaps, debates and key themes in the literature		
4. Identifies and selects a broad range of sources independently		
5. Explains theories and concepts, sometimes comparing different viewpoints		
6. Research tasks follow clear structure and guidance		
7. Analyses and synthesises sources to develop deeper insights		
8. Research is self-directed and evolves as understanding develops		
9. Reading focuses on understanding and explaining key ideas		
10. Reading critically evaluates evidence and informs argument development		
ANSWERS: UG level = 1, 2, 5, 6 and 9 PGT level = 3, 4, 7, 8 and 10		

Writing and referencing skills

Academic writing at postgraduate taught (PGT) level typically expects greater **depth**, **critique** and **clarity** than undergraduate (UG) writing.

In this section of the toolkit you can learn more about **how academic writing and referencing differ at PGT level** and explore some **common challenges**.

*Writing at PGT level may feel more demanding at first but, with **practice** and **engaging with feedback**, your **confidence** and **precision** will grow.*

What is academic writing?

Academic writing is based on academic English, which is **formal in tone**, **evidence-based** and typically written in a **third-person perspective**. Academic writing is how you will **present your ideas**, **research** and **arguments** in a written format. Like any system, it has rules and conventions to learn and follow.

At PGT level, these conventions do not change significantly, but expectations of how you use them do. You'll be expected to apply them more **independently** and **purposefully**, developing a **clear** and **sustained argument**, **integrating evidence effectively** and **positioning** your work within a broader academic conversation.

When will I use academic writing?

You are likely to use academic writing in **written assignments** such as **essays** and **reports** as well as in **other formats** such as **academic posters**, **oral presentations** and **exams**. A great resource to explore if you need a refresher, or perhaps you've had a break in your studies, is your [Academic Writing Toolkit](#).

Writing at PGT level

At PGT level, academic writing involves **clearly communicating ideas**, **engaging with disciplinary debates** and **using evidence to support your decisions**. You'll be expected to work more **critically** and **independently**, building sustained arguments, engaging with theory, and recognising context and perspective. Accurate referencing underpins your writing,

helping you construct **credible arguments** and **demonstrate academic integrity**. Specific expectations will vary, so always refer to your module or programme guidance and discuss with your tutors.

Writing at UG Levels 3-6	Writing at PGT Level 7
Demonstrates understanding of a topic.	Develops and sustains a critical and original argument , questioning assumptions and evidence.
Writing is often guided by question structure .	Writing is independent , nuanced and self-directed .
Uses sources to support points and begins to compare and critique sources.	Synthesises and critically evaluates multiple sources to develop insights and original arguments.
Evidence supports ideas , with some analysis alongside description.	Evidence is analysed , weighed and used strategically, in predominantly analytical writing.
Follows clear, taught structures , academic conventions and tutor expectations .	Uses flexible , sophisticated structures shaped by argument and discipline specific style.
Develops academic voice and understanding what others have already written on a topic.	Confident, authoritative voice that positions writing within academic field.

What is referencing?

Academic writing is **evidence-based** and **referencing** is how you **demonstrate** your evidence. Referencing is the **acknowledgement** of all the sources that have been **cited** in your assignment, whether you have **quoted** them directly or **paraphrased** them.

There are **various referencing styles** available and **your tutor will let you know** which one they want you to use in your work. Referencing information is also usually available in your module or year of study handbook. The majority of programmes at Edge Hill use the **Edge Hill Harvard referencing style**, but you can explore the different styles by visiting the [UniSkills Referencing web page](#) or the referencing tab on your [Subject Resources web pages](#).

When will I use referencing?

You need to reference **any time you use, or refer to, another person's work** within your own work. All styles of referencing generally consist of two parts:

- A **citation** in the **main text** of your assignment.
- A complete list of **references**, or a **bibliography**, at the **end** of your work.

You can explore the differences between a **reference** list and **bibliography** in the tabs below and should **always check which style your tutor requires** for each assignment you complete.

REFERENCE LIST

A reference list is an explicit list of sources cited in your assignment.

A reference list is a list of sources you cited, which is presented at the end of an assignment such as an essay or presentation. In an essay, it appears under a heading of *Reference List* or *References* beginning on a fresh page. It is formatted depending on the referencing style you use on your programme.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography includes any wider materials that has informed your assignment.

Although the terms reference list and bibliography are often used interchangeably, a bibliography is technically a list at the end of an assignment such as an essay which includes all the sources cited in the text as well as any background reading. It starts on a fresh page under a heading *Bibliography*. The sources will be formatted according to the referencing style you use on your programme.

Referencing at PGT level

While there is significant crossover between UG and PGT study, the purpose and use of referencing develops at PGT level to support **your advanced academic writing**. At this PGT level, referencing is not just about acknowledging your sources, it is also about **demonstrating your critical judgement**, independence and depth of research.

Edge Hill University | UniSkills Toolkit Alternative Format

You are expected to **use sources more selectively and strategically**, acknowledging how they contribute to your argument, positioning your work within the wider academic or professional context and evidencing connections between ideas.

Referencing at UG Levels 3-6	Referencing at PGT Level 7
Acknowledges sources to avoid plagiarism and demonstrate good academic practice .	Demonstrates how work fits within wider academic or professional contexts and scholarly engagement.
Uses sources to support understanding and explain key concepts .	Uses sources to support critical arguments and develop informed positions .
Relies on recommended reading list and may focus on including a set, or sufficient, number of sources.	Draws on broader, independent and specialist range of material, uses selectively and strategically.
Sources are often used to support points , with limited synthesis and basic evaluation.	Sources are synthesised , critically evaluated and used to develop, challenge and refine arguments.
May summarise individual sources with less emphasis on positioning your own voice .	Integrates sources to build nuanced conclusions and establish an authoritative academic voice .

Common concerns

We asked your Academic Skills Advisors what the most common concerns were raised by PGT students when it came to academic writing and referencing. Read on to learn more about real life student concerns and how UniSkills can help reassure and support.

Writing at Level 7

Concern: *Not sure how to write at Level 7 in my subject.*

Reassurance: Writing at Level 7 **varies greatly between disciplines** and you typically demonstrate levelness by using sources to build and defend your argument. **Synthesising key ideas, critically evaluating evidence** and **justifying your conclusions** is the strongest way to demonstrate your level of writing. Expectations vary by subject, so it's important

to use **marking criteria**, **exemplars** and **tutor feedback** to interpret what Level 7 means in your context.

Ask yourself: Are you mainly reporting what others have written, or are you using what they have reported to make a justified argument? Have you checked your work against your marking rubric, learning outcomes or discussed expectations with your tutor?

Resources: [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) | [Being Critical Toolkit](#) | [Dissertations and Research Projects Toolkit](#)

Critical writing and analysis

Concern: *Struggling to write critically.*

Reassurance: Being critical at PGT level means engaging with ideas, not just questioning everything. You **demonstrate criticality by comparing perspectives, evaluating evidence, and explaining** why certain **ideas** are **more convincing** or **relevant to your argument**.

Ask yourself: Are you simply describing sources, or are you analysing their strengths, limitations and contributions to your argument?

Resource: [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) | [Being Critical Toolkit](#)

Academic voice and argument

Concern: *Not sure argument is clear or I am writing 'academic' enough.*

Reassurance: PGT writing requires a **sustained line of argument throughout your work**. Each section should **link back to your overall position** and **contribute to your conclusion**. An academic tone of voice at PGT level is not about complex language, but about **clarity, confidence** and **authority**. This comes from **making clear claims** and **supporting them** with well-chosen evidence.

Ask yourself: Are you clearly stating your position, or are you hiding behind what other authors say? Does each paragraph clearly support your main argument?

Resources: [Academic Writing Toolkit](#) | [Being Critical Toolkit](#) | [Finding Academic Information Toolkit](#)

Using sources effectively

Concern: *Not sure using sources in the right way, covering more topics or focusing on detail.*

Reassurance: At PGT level, it's less about how many sources you include and more about **how you use them**. Strong writing integrates sources to **support, challenge and develop your argument**, rather than presenting them one by one. And at PGT level **depth is usually more important than breadth**. Engaging deeply with selected ideas, debates or case studies allows you to **demonstrate critical thinking and strong analysis**.

Ask yourself: Are your sources helping you make a point, or are you just showing that you've read them? Are you trying to cover too much, or are you exploring key ideas in sufficient depth?

Resources: [Finding Academic Information Toolkit](#) | [Being Critical Toolkit](#)

Managing large research projects

Concern: *Not sure approaching research project in the right way.*

Reassurance: PGT research projects are often more complex and self-directed, so it's normal to feel uncertain. There isn't a single "right" way to approach your project. Instead, it's an **iterative process**: refining your question, testing ideas and adjusting your approach as your understanding develops. Most strong projects **evolve over time** rather than being fully formed from the start.

Breaking the work into manageable stages, such as defining your focus, reviewing literature, planning your methodology, analysing findings and drafting, can make it **feel more achievable** and **help you maintain momentum**. Regular feedback from supervisors or tutors is also a valuable part of the process.

Ask yourself: Are you planning and reviewing your progress regularly, or trying to tackle everything at once? Have you broken your project down into smaller chunks of work?

Resources: [Dissertations and Research Projects Toolkit](#)

Research changing direction

Concern: *Unsure what to do as research is changing direction.*

Reassurance: It's very **common for PGT research to evolve** as your understanding deepens and your engagement with the literature becomes more critical. This isn't usually a sign that something has gone wrong, it often **demonstrates you're thinking more carefully** and refining your focus.

Research at this level is rarely linear, and **adapting your approach** in response to new insights, evidence or challenges is an **expected and valuable** part of the process. What matters is that any changes are thoughtful, justified and help strengthen the overall coherence of your project.

Ask yourself: Are your changes thoughtful and justified by what you've learned?

Resources: [Dissertations and Research Projects Toolkit](#)

Managing self-directed study time

Concern: *Not sure doing enough self-directed study or managing workload effectively.*

Reassurance: PGT study places greater emphasis on independence, but this develops over time. You're expected to **take initiative in finding sources, shaping your ideas** and **directing your work**, with guidance available when you need it. Although PGT study involves a significant amount of independent reading and research, planning, prioritising and setting realistic goals can help you stay on track.

Ask yourself: Are you relying mainly on materials and guidance provided, or are you exploring further to shape your own approach? Are you allocating enough time for reading, or leaving it too late in the process?

Resources: [Time Management Toolkit](#) | [Academic Resilience Toolkit](#)

Summary

All of these academic skills do become easier the more you use them, and there's lots of support available from your tutors and UniSkills to help you practice and develop.

Check your learning

Activity: Read the statements below and tick whether you think they are an expectation for writing and referencing at UG or PGT level.

Statement	UG	PGT
1. Uses a flexible structure shaped by the argument and disciplinary conventions		
2. Focuses on explaining key ideas clearly to show understanding of a topic		
3. Selects and integrates sources strategically to develop and refine an argument		
4. Follows a clear structure guided by an assignment question or tutor expectations		
5. Uses sources mainly to support points and explain concepts		
6. Analyses evidence critically to support a mainly analytical discussion		
7. Evidence used to support ideas, sometimes with more description than analysis		
8. Builds a critical argument that challenges assumptions		
9. Uses referencing to acknowledge sources correctly and avoid plagiarism		

10. Uses referencing to position work within academic debates		
ANSWERS: UG level = 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9 PGT level = 1, 3, 6, 8 and 10		

How to access your support

Congratulations on completing this toolkit

By exploring this toolkit you have learned more about the **advanced academic skills** you will use and build upon as a postgraduate taught (PGT) student. And you will have **plenty of opportunity to practise** and **develop** these skills further throughout your student journey.

There is **lots of support available** to you, both in-person and online, bookable and self-directed, so **however you prefer to access** there's something for you.

Access your support

UniSkills

Whatever your subject or level of study, UniSkills is your key to academic success.

UniSkills provide a comprehensive programme of [workshops](#), [online resources](#) and [one-to-one support](#) tailored to **enhance your academic abilities** and **boost your confidence** at university and beyond.

[Access a wealth of online academic skills resources](#), including video tutorials, digital guides and [interactive toolkits](#), all **available 24/7** via the UniSkills web pages. From finding academic information, to critical thinking, academic reading and writing, referencing, preparing for assessments, presenting with confidence and much more!

Disability Support

[Additional study skills support is also available](#) if you have a **Specific Learning Differences (SpLD)** or disability, such as **dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia** and **ADHD**.

Your SpLD team offer [access to support](#) and [technologies](#) to develop **effective study strategies** and mitigate the impact of any challenges. If you have any other conditions you can also access a range of support from your [Inclusion team](#).

Academic Resilience

Academic resilience is about developing your **skills** and **mindset to cope with challenges** and **thrive in your studies**. Understanding what resilience means in an academic context can help you adopt practical strategies to **manage stress, stay motivated, respond to feedback** and **adapt to setbacks** such as disappointing marks, mistakes or lack of confidence.

By maintaining your **wellbeing**, taking a positive approach to **problem-solving** and accessing **support networks** effectively, you can strengthen your ability to stay focused and succeed, even when faced with challenges. **Academic resilience can be learned** and a great place to learn more is your [Academic Resilience Toolkit](#).

Digital Skills

Access a range of support, resources and short courses to help you **build your confidence, independence** and **digital skills** at your own pace:

- Explore a range of self-help guides and video tutorials to support your studies on your [Digital skills web pages](#).
- All students have full, free access to thousands of high-quality online courses and video tutorials written by industry experts on [LinkedIn Learning](#).
- If you need help with your digital skills, or have any questions about using university systems, you can [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#).
- Access year-round [targeted support campaigns](#) to help settle in, find your study-happy-balance and ace your assessments.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

At university, GenAI can support your studying by helping you explore ideas, understand complex concepts, plan or draft work and gain feedback, but it **must be used ethically** and **in line with the University's guidance**.

You can learn more about GenAI, including how to access your ***Student Guide to Ethical Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence*** and related resources on the [UniSkills GenAI web page](#).

Learning Communities

In addition to your timetabled studies, **engaging in learning communities with your peers** can be valuable, enriching and help you build a **stronger sense of belonging**.

There are lots of ways to engage with learning communities at Edge Hill, from [UniSkills Workshops](#) to [Students' Union Societies](#) and even [events provided by your Student Life team](#).

Productive Mornings

There's lots of ways you can **maximise your mornings** to support your studies. Whether you're commuting to or from the **Ormskirk** or **Manchester St. James'** campuses, or getting ready for the day in your residential accommodation.

[Play the video to learn more about how Student Advisor, Ivy, ensures a **productive morning**](#) by:

- Logging into **Outlook emails, calendar** and **Blackboard** to check for any **updates, announcements** or **prep work**.
- Accessing eBooks and listening to **lecture recordings** or **academic podcasts**.
- **Converting documents into audio files** to listen to while travelling or getting ready.
- **Visiting Catalyst** when it's open 24/7, during term time, using UniCard swipe access.

Commuter Breakfasts

[Play the video to join your Student Advisor, Dan, as he enjoys **catching up with friends**, picking up a **free pastry and hot drink** and **learning more about specialist support** at a commuter breakfast event.](#)

Commuter breakfasts are available at both **Ormskirk** and **Manchester St James'** campuses, and you can find out more about upcoming events by exploring your [Student Life portal](#).

Study-Life Balance

It's important to find a **happy and healthy study-life balance** that works for you. It helps you **avoid burnout** and can give your **mental health and wellbeing** a much needed boost.

[Play the video to find out how Student Advisor, Ivy, embraces her **study-life balance**](#) by:

- Using the [Libby app](#) or picking up a **fiction book** from the University Library.
- Accessing **free mental health and wellbeing support** through the [Edge Well 24/7 app](#).
- Making use of **quiet** and **reflective spaces** available on **Ormskirk** and **Manchester St. James'** campuses.

Catalyst Specialist Support

Learn all about who and what Catalyst is, how Catalyst specialist support can help you thrive on your student journey and how to access everything you need in your [Catalyst Induction Toolkit](#). This toolkit provides a condensed overview of all the support available to you and is available 365 days a year for you to revisit whenever you need.

And remember, you don't have to know *who* can support you, as you can always [contact the Catalyst Helpdesk](#) and they will triage you to the right support.

Final farewell

[Play the video for a final message of good luck from your Academic Skills Advisor, Adam.](#)

Video transcript

Hello again. We hope you've enjoyed exploring your Preparing to Study Toolkit. Transitioning into postgraduate level study can feel like big step up from undergraduate study, and we understand it can feel like there's lots of new skills to learn at this stage, but please don't feel daunted or overwhelmed – all these skills you'll continue to develop throughout your time at university. And UniSkills is here to support you on your journey – offering workshops, one-to-one appointments and a range of online resources (such as our suite of academic skills toolkits). Best of luck with the rest of your student journey, whatever that entails for you, and we can't wait to meet and support you more soon.

Your experience matters

How could we improve your toolkit?

Thank you for engaging with this alternative format of the toolkit, we hope you've found it useful learning more about your foundational academic skills and how you'll study at Edge Hill University. We'd love to know what you thought of the content and [invite you to share your feedback](#) with us in a very quick survey, which should take you no longer than five minutes to complete.