

Different types of doctoral programmes

The University of Southampton offers three types of doctoral degree at Level 8 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications:

- The PhD , where assessment is solely by final thesis or published work (e.g. the Three-paper PhD), or by artefact or performance that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it in its academic context;
- A Research Degree with a Major Taught Component ('professional' or 'taught' doctorate) which contains a substantial taught element, and normally includes the name of the discipline in the title (e.g. EdD for Doctor of Education);
- The Integrated PhD programme, which combines taught and research elements with professional skills training, and normally includes the name of the discipline in the title (e.g. Integrated PhD in Economics).

The University also offers a limited number of higher doctorates such as the DSc (Doctor of Science), obtainable usually by the submission of published work.

Importance of the Research Environment

Before recruiting research students, a Faculty or research group should be capable of demonstrating that it can provide an appropriate research environment for their supervision.

The characteristics of an environment suitable for research supervision are set out in the Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision (Paragraph 2).

General Aims of Doctoral Programmes

Doctoral degrees are higher degrees involving a programme of research training and supervision, leading to production of a thesis which is the outcome of original research. Research Degrees with a Major Taught Component and Integrated programmes also include some combination of compulsory and elective taught units and/or group projects that focus on specialist aspects of the discipline named in the title of the doctorate.

The general aims of doctoral programmes are to:

- provide the student with an opportunity to acquire expert knowledge in a specialist field of an academic discipline;
- furnish training in research methods, such as the use of technical literature and published materials, and the techniques of empirical research (e.g. experimental and/or fieldwork methods and the use of records and documents);
- enable the student to design, implement and report upon an independent research project;
- foster development of a capacity for analysis, constructive criticism, originality and independence of thought;
- provide experience of participation in the research culture of an academic department, including opportunities where appropriate to teach undergraduate students;
 - Enable the student to develop the professional, practical, and personal skills and attributes for career progression in their chosen field;
 - Facilitate the student to undertake autonomous research and make a contribution at the forefront of knowledge in their field.

Entry Qualifications

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the motivation and potential to complete a sustained piece of research and produce a thesis. They should normally hold a good honours degree, or equivalent, from a recognised UK or overseas university or Higher Education institution.. In some

disciplines, a Master's degree, or equivalent, will be required for entry to a PhD programme. In exceptional circumstances candidates with other qualifications and appropriate experience may be accepted. Candidates will normally initially be registered for the award of MPhil or MPhil (Res Meth), with the possibility of upgrade/ transfer to the relevant doctoral programme.

Outcomes of Doctoral Degrees

Doctorates are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems; and
- A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Abilities of holders of the qualification

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- Continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;
- Demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

Programme Structure

PhD programme

The PhD programme is increasingly structured around research training and generic/transferable skills training requirements, in addition to involving a period of supervised research and thesis preparation. The 'Research Councils' Skills Training Requirements for Research Students' on the training expected of doctoral students may be found in the Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision Appendix 2.

The programme shall be pursued in the University except where the regulations for the specific award provide for research to be carried out with proper supervision in an appropriate setting elsewhere.

A PhD programme shall normally be undertaken over a period of not less than two years of full-time study. For part-time study the programme is normally undertaken over a period of not less than three years. In practice the period of candidature will usually be longer than the minimum period; the maximum period for full-time study is four years and seven years for part-time study.

Research Degrees with a Major Taught Component*

Known as a 'professional' or 'taught Doctorate, each programme shall contain some combination of taught compulsory and elective units, individual and/or group projects, and a written thesis. The programme shall be pursued in the University except where the regulations for the specific award provide for research to be carried out with proper supervision in an appropriate setting elsewhere.

The scheme of study for each programme shall normally be undertaken over a period of not less than three years of full-time study, except in the case of the Engineering Doctorate where the

minimum period of study is four years. Where part-time study is permitted, the maximum period for part-time study is seven years.

Integrated PhD Programme

Each programme shall contain a combination of taught, research and professional skills training elements, including a substantial period of supervised research and thesis preparation. More details can be found in this document.

The scheme of study for the Integrated PhD programme shall normally be undertaken over a period of four years full-time study, with submission of the thesis not later than one year after the end of the fourth year of study. Where part-time study is permitted, candidates are required to submit a thesis not later than one year after the end of the seventh year of study.

Teaching and Learning

For degrees with a taught element, a variety of teaching styles and learning methods should be used which are appropriate to the nature of the discipline being taught and are designed to deliver the programme aims. The pattern of contact hours will vary according to the type of discipline and the delivery of the programme must be appropriate to this.

Details of the expected learning outcomes of the programme should be included in a Programme Specification and made available to students via the Faculty/Academic Unit website.

Supervision

All students will be assigned a team of at least two supervisors to supervise their progress in the research phase and while writing up their thesis. Students on programmes with a taught element will normally be assigned a personal tutor during the coursework phase of their programme.

Assessment

For programmes with a taught element the nature of assessment of coursework or project work should be stated in the Programme Specification. An external examiner must be involved in the moderation of units, which are formally assessed as part of the of the programme.

The length of the thesis is usually 75,000 words. Alternative word limits may be set by the regulations for each programme. A viva voce (oral) examination for the thesis is required, necessitating the appointment of an internal and external examiner for each individual candidate. In the case of certain taught doctoral programmes, it is permissible to appoint an internal examiner and external examiner for a cohort of students where the number of theses and range of research projects permit this sort of arrangement. Permission to appoint internal and external examiners should be obtained from the relevant Faculty Programmes Committee.