

Doctoral Programme Profile 2020-21

The Doctoral Programme Profile provides a concise summary of the main features of a doctoral programme at the University of Southampton, and the learning outcomes that a typical research student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. Additional Faculty, School and discipline-specific information is provided where applicable and more details can be found in the [Postgraduate Research Handbook](#).

The Doctoral Programme Profile should be read in conjunction with the University of Southampton's [Regulations for Research Degrees and Higher Doctorates](#). These govern all postgraduate research awards at the University of Southampton and particular attention should be given to the [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#). Programme-specific exemptions, variations or additional requirements, approved by Academic Quality and Standards Committee, are located in [section VI of the University Calendar](#).

Please note: As a research-led University, we undertake a continuous review of our programmes to ensure quality enhancement and to manage our resources. As a result, this programme may be revised during a student's period of registration; however, any revision will be balanced against the requirement that the student should receive the educational service expected. Please read our [Disclaimer](#) to see why, when and how changes may be made to a student's programme.

Awarding Institution	University of Southampton
Teaching Institution	University of Southampton
Mode of study	Full-time or Part-time
Duration of the degree	The minimum and maximum period of candidature is as specified in the Regulations for Research Degrees . Funders may place an expectation that studies are completed within a defined timescale.
Accreditation details	N/A
Final award	Doctor of Philosophy
Name of award	PhD
Interim Exit Awards	Master of Philosophy
FHEQ level of final award	8
QAA Subject Benchmark or other external reference	QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement (2020)
Date profile was written	December 2019
Date profile last updated	August 2020

Research Environment

The University of Southampton is changing the world for the better, working with industry, governments and research institutions to make a global impact. We are a world-class research-intensive Russell Group University; over 97% of our research has been assessed as world-leading and internationally excellent in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014. The University of Southampton is strongly committed to providing the very best learning experience to all our students in a friendly and stimulating environment. We are known nationally and internationally for our excellence in research and teaching, and are continually seeking to improve the scope and delivery of our activities. We aim to generate a community of doctoral graduates equipped to act as research leaders in some of the most pressing global challenges.

All of our 3,000 doctoral research students are members of the [Doctoral College](#) which is mandated by Senate to lead and direct the development of the Doctoral Researcher environment at the University.

Professional Development and Transferable Skills

It is University policy and the expectation of funders that research students have access to a suitable programme of research skills, professional development, and transferable skills training which address individual needs and help research students to prepare for their subsequent careers. The [Doctoral College](#) delivers a range of skills training and personal development opportunities to meet the needs of researchers from across all of our disciplines. The provision has been informed by the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and an extensive range of development opportunities aligned with the RDF is listed on the Doctoral College [webpages](#). Some courses are [mandatory](#) and must be taken by all research students.

Additional Faculty, School and/or discipline-specific requirements will be detailed in the [Postgraduate Research Handbook](#).

Support for Student Learning

Learning and Supervision

Research students are allocated a supervisory team consisting of at least two supervisors from the University of Southampton. The main supervisor has responsibility for the supervision of the design and progress of the student's research project and for providing academic advice to the research student. The main supervisor should be available to provide guidance and direction on a regular basis. The main supervisor will normally also undertake the role of co-ordinating supervisor. The co-ordinating supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the administrative processes are completed in a timely manner through a research student's candidature. Second or co-supervisors may be appointed to the supervisory team and supervisors working for other organisations may be appointed as external supervisors in order to provide specialist expertise or if a funder requires it.

Applicants may indicate a preference for the supervisory team on their application form, but the names will not be confirmed until a formal offer is made. In some cases, the composition of a supervisory team may change as the research project evolves and in response to other circumstances.

Research students will develop core knowledge and understanding through their own research and guided independent study via individual supervision meetings.

There are numerous facilities and services to support the learning of research students at the University of Southampton, some of which are accessible to students across the University and some of which will be geared more to those within a particular Faculty, School or discipline.

The University provides:

- [library resources](#), including e-books, on-line journals and databases, which are comprehensive and up-to-date; together with assistance from Library staff to enable you to make the best use of these resources
- high speed access to online electronic learning resources on the Internet from dedicated PC Workstations onsite and from your own devices; laptops, smartphones and tablet PCs via the Eduroam wireless network. There is a wide range of application software available from the Student Public Workstations.
- computer accounts which will connect you to a number of learning technologies for example, the Blackboard virtual learning environment (which facilitates online learning and access to specific learning resources)
- [standard ICT tools](#) such as Email, secure filestore and calendars.
- access to key information through the MySouthampton Student Mobile Portal which delivers timetables, Module information, Locations, Tutor details, Library account, bus timetables etc. while you are on the move.
- [IT support](#) through a comprehensive website, telephone and online ticketed support and a dedicated helpdesk in the Hartley Library.
- [Enabling Services](#) offering support services and resources via a triage model to access crisis management, mental health support and counselling. Support includes weekday daily [Drop Ins](#) or via [on-line chat](#). Arrangements can also be made for meetings via Skype.
- assessment and support (including specialist IT support) facilities if you have a [disability](#), long term health problem or Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. [dyslexia](#))
- [the Student Services Centre](#) (SSC) to assist you with a range of general enquiries including financial matters, accommodation, exams, graduation, student visas, ID cards
- [Careers and Employability services](#), advising on job search, applications, interviews, paid work, volunteering and internship opportunities and getting the most out of your extra-curricular activities alongside your degree programme when writing your CV
- Other support that includes health services ([GPs](#)), [chaplaincy](#) (for all faiths) and ['out of hours' support](#) for students in Halls and in the local community.
- A [Centre for Language Study](#), providing assistance in the development of English language and study skills for non-native speakers.

The Students' Union provides

- an academic student representation system, consisting of Postgraduate Officers and the Vice-President (Education and Democracy): SUSU provides training and support for all these representatives, whose role is to represent students' views to the University;
- opportunities for extracurricular activities and volunteering;
- an Advice Centre offering free and confidential advice including support if you need to make an academic appeal'
- Support for student peer-to-peer groups, such as [Nightline](#).

Programme Aims

The aims of a doctoral programme are to:

- provide knowledge and understanding of a chosen area/discipline at an advanced level and training in established research techniques appropriate to the area;
- develop a capacity in research students for original research based on a thorough understanding of their chosen field in collaboration with their supervisory team;
- provide research students with a broader and deeper knowledge of the chosen area/discipline and its application at graduate level;
- produce theses and subsequent publications that contribute to the development of and understanding of the chosen area/discipline;
- offer research students a supportive environment so that they feel that they are part of a community of scholars and are well placed to pursue a career building on their accomplished research;
- give research students the opportunity to present their work to colleagues, and to bring the research student into contact with the wider research community, enabling them to build networks with others researching in the same field.

Programme Outcomes

For the award of Doctor of Philosophy, a research student must have demonstrated¹:

- 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 an area of professional practice;
- the general ability to conceptualize, 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;
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

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.

In addition, holders of the qualification will have:

- 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.

¹ The outcomes cited here for PhD are taken from the QAA's document: [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, October 2014](#).

Admission

At a minimum, successful applicants must meet the admissions requirements of the University's [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#). Additional criteria may be set and these will be defined on programme [webpages](#). Applicants to some research projects may be required to undergo additional checks (e.g: Disclosure and Barring Service).

Applications are submitted using the University [online application form](#). A full guide to this process may be downloaded from the [application guide](#). Applicants may be interviewed and references will be taken up. A formal project proposal may or may not be required, but applicants should indicate the area of their research interests at the time of application.

International applicants can check if they need a visa for study in the UK on the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) [website](#). International applicants holding a Tier 4 visa sponsored by another institution and wishing to apply for transfer to the University of Southampton should refer to the [Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service](#) for guidance. For any student accepted for transfer, there would be a minimum of 12 months between the date of transfer and submission of thesis even if the applicant has already upgraded from MPhil to PhD or had PhD registration confirmed in a formal stage at their previous institution.

English Language Proficiency

The University's Admissions policy on English Language requirements can be found [here](#).

Programme Structure

The following summary should be read in conjunction with the [Regulations for Research Degrees](#), the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#), and the [Postgraduate Research Handbook](#).

Unlike undergraduate study, the open-ended nature of research means it is not possible to always predict the structure of a programme of study leading to a thesis. Research students are however, all required to undertake Progression Reviews during their studies, as detailed in the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#). The information shown below is indicative of what you can expect.

The minimum and maximum length of candidature is as specified in the [Regulations for Research Degrees](#). In practice, the period of candidature will usually be longer than the minimum period. Additional conditions may be imposed on you by your funder (e.g: an expectation that studies are completed within a defined timescale).

Outset of programme

The Faculty is responsible for ensuring the appointment of an appropriate supervisory team, chosen to provide adequate academic expertise. The roles of the members of the supervisory team should be explained to you and you should discuss and agree the pattern and frequency of contact between members of the supervisory team. The initial objectives of the research should be discussed at the outset of your degree programme and you should have written an outline of the motivation for your research, together with a plan of work for year 1.

Your personal and professional development needs, including transferable skills, should be assessed within three months of entry to your degree programme. This is done by means of an Academic Needs Analysis. The Academic Needs Analysis should highlight any modules or training that should be attended to in order to enhance your studies and it is expected that you will take a combination of substantive, technical and skills training courses (some of them mandatory). Training may be provided in-house or by arranging access to external training programmes.

You are also required to maintain a Data Management Plan, as set out in the Research Data Management guide on the [Library website](#). A preliminary Data Management Plan should be assessed within three months of entry to your degree programme. The Data Management Plan may inform the Academic Needs Analysis (e.g: training connected to research data management).

Throughout your first year, you will be expected to develop knowledge in your chosen area of research through reading and developing a review of previous work in the area. You will also be developing your research questions for your research and starting to conduct analyses, where appropriate. The timescales for these tasks will be discussed with your supervisory team.

At the end of your first year (pro-rata for part-time students), you will be required to undertake the First Progression Review. This is to ensure that the research is progressing well and on target, and provides an opportunity for issues to be raised about the programme or the supervisory arrangements.

Ongoing and throughout the degree programme

As you progress beyond the outset of your degree programme, you are expected to expand on the work already started and to enter fully into the analysis of the research questions. Your progress on the degree will continue to be monitored, with activity reports and written work being required as appropriate. You will be required to undertake Progression Reviews at fixed points during the course of your candidature, and will be formally assessed for Confirmation of Doctoral Candidature at your Second Progression Review. Detailed information about these requirements is set out in the [Regulations for Research Degrees and the Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#). If your progress is unsatisfactory, or the standard of work unacceptable, you should be made aware of this and should take steps in a timely fashion to develop a constructive plan for improvement. Target dates for successive stages of the work should be set to encourage timely submission of the thesis.

Latter stages

The ultimate responsibility for the thesis lies with you and it is therefore essential that you participate fully in planning the research project, considering advice and discussing the work with your supervisory team. You are responsible for maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the research plan as agreed with your supervisory team. You must therefore provide regular updates on progress at least every three months.

Thesis Submission and Examination

The maximum length of candidature is as specified in the [Regulations for Research Degrees](#). The period of candidature ends when the thesis is submitted. A research student who fails to submit a thesis by the end of the maximum period of candidature shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the degree.

The maximum length of a thesis submitted for the award of PhD is normally 75,000 words in the case of a PhD, excluding references and bibliography. The thesis is examined by at least one internal and one external examiner and the research student will be required to attend for a *viva voce* oral examination. The research student must satisfy the examiners in both the thesis and the *viva voce*.

If you fail to submit a thesis by the end of the maximum period of candidature, you will be deemed to have withdrawn from the degree programme. The decision to submit is your own – you should take note of supervision advice, but this advice should not be taken as an indication that the final thesis will fulfil the requirements of the examiners.

Intermediate Exit Points

Master of Philosophy (MPhil): In some cases, research students may not, or cannot, continue through to completion of the PhD. Research students may make such decisions for themselves, or it can be based on unsatisfactory performance at one of the formal Progression Reviews described above. If a research student decides to carry out research but at MPhil level, they will need to transfer onto an MPhil degree.

The MPhil is a separate, distinct FHEQ Level 7 award and differs from the PhD in terms of the scope of study required and the extent of the original personal contribution to knowledge. In any case, an MPhil may be awarded only after successful examination of a suitable thesis by an internal and external examiner and passing a *viva voce*. See paragraphs 6 and 7 of the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#) for further details on the criteria for the award of an MPhil.

Fees, Additional Costs and Funding

The current fees charged for doctoral programmes are found on the University's Fees and Funding for Postgraduate Students [website](#) which also gives details of some opportunities to obtain funding for your PhD. Other external sources of funding may also be available.

An offer of any funding is distinct and independent from the offer of a place for candidature, and so separate applications for admission to the University and for funding may be required. An offer of funding will depend on the availability of funds, the rules governing source of the funds, the academic competition for them, as well as eligibility. Research students may be in receipt of funding for shorter periods than the length of the programme. This may vary from year to year and within each annual recruitment cycle.

If an applicant is offered (and accepts) funding, whether administered through the University of Southampton or an external organisation the amount of funding, the level and the duration of payments will depend on the funder. Any funding may be enough to cover the fees, provide a stipend and funds for supporting research and training, only some of these, fully or only partially. The duration of any funding may be different from the maximum duration of candidature.

A research student in receipt of funding:

- will be expected to continue to pay fees (and support themselves financially) if there was a shortfall in amount, level or duration;
- may have to meet additional obligations to the funder.

Due to the individual nature of each research project, applicants should ensure that they discuss likely additional costs during the application process. Students will be responsible for the payment of all costs incurred in the preparation and submission of their thesis for examination and, depending upon the source of funding, students may also be responsible for meeting additional costs associated with the research project.

Before recommending the acceptance of an applicant, both the Faculty and the applicant must be made aware of the costs of the planned research, the financial support available, and any additional obligations to the funder that may be a condition of the funding available.