

## Programme Specification for PhD

<b>This document applies to Academic Year 2020/21 onwards</b>
---

<b>1.</b>	<b>Awarding institution/body</b>	University of Worcester
<b>2.</b>	<b>Teaching institution</b>	University of Worcester
<b>3.</b>	<b>Programme accredited by</b>	n/a
<b>4.</b>	<b>Final award or awards</b>	PhD
<b>5.</b>	<b>Programme title</b>	Doctor of Philosophy
<b>6.</b>	<b>Pathways available</b>	n/a
<b>7.</b>	<b>Mode and/or site of delivery</b>	Supervision, face-to-face and virtual, with taught elements (delivered through blended learning) for the embedded PG Cert and the wider Researcher Development Programme
<b>8.</b>	<b>Mode of attendance and duration</b>	Full time and Part time
<b>9.</b>	<b>UCAS Code</b>	n/a
<b>10.</b>	<b>Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement</b>	The programme is mapped on to Vitae's Researcher Development Framework and is designed to reflect the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, in particular the guidance on "Research Degrees".
<b>11.</b>	<b>Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision</b>	August 2016, August 2017 - AQU amendments, August 2018 – AQU amendments, February 2019 – AQU amendments, May 2020 – Research School amendments

### **12. Educational aims of the programme**

The programme aims to equip students with the skills to design, research and write a research-based project to the standard expected at PhD by the University of Worcester.

The PhD thesis shall comprise an integrated whole, present a coherent argument, and form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power.

### **13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods**

Students completing the programme will have acquired a range of analytical and presentational skills appropriate to a wide range of professional activities and will be able to:

1. Conduct enquiry leading to the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship;
2. Frame questions about complex problems and conduct research at a high level to answer those questions;
3. Offer critical appraisal and understanding of other research in the field of theory and/or practice;
4. Gather evidence of different kinds from different sources;
5. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the methodology of enquiry;
6. Show the ability to conceptualise, design and implement a programme of research which will generate new knowledge at the forefront of the discipline or field of practice, including the capacity to adjust the programme in the light of emergent issues and understandings;
7. Make independent judgement of issues and ideas in the field of research and/or practice and is able to communicate and justify that judgement to appropriate audiences;

8. Critically reflect on their work and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, including understanding validation procedures;
9. Present research findings effectively in both oral and written form.

## **Learning, teaching and assessment**

All students must engage in and pass a PG Cert in Research Methods during the early stages of the PhD (by the end of Year 1 for FT students and the end of Year 2 for PT students) in order to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to plan, design and implement a programme of research. They are also expected to engage in a wider Research Student Development Programme across their PhD in order to continue to develop their research skills but also to develop skills to enable the successful dissemination of their research and to prepare them for employment beyond the end of their PhD.

The main mode of “teaching” is supervision from a team of experts who provide guidance and support and feedback on the student’s programme of research at all stages from its inception to its implementation to the delivery of the thesis.

The student’s progress is assessed by the supervisory team on an ongoing basis but more formally through an Annual Progress Review.

The student is subject to summative assessment through the modules in the PG Cert and ultimately through the thesis and associated oral examination (*viva voce*) at the end of their programme.

## **Teaching**

For the PG Cert and the wider Research Student Development programme, Students are taught through a combination of interactive workshops, lectures, online courses, practical sessions (including lab sessions), and fieldwork as appropriate to the student’s field of study:

- Interactive workshops take a variety of formats and are intended to enable the application of learning through discussion and small group activities.
- Lectures are focused on imparting high-level general information.
- Online courses are focused on developing general research skills.
- Practical sessions and fieldwork are focused on developing subject specific research skills and are mainly delivered by the supervisory team.

Supervision is undertaken by a team of 2-3 supervisors one of whom is designated as the Director of Studies who will normally be the primary supervisor, responsible for overseeing student progress, managing supervisory relations and ensuring the student complies with regulatory requirements and relevant processes. Supervision will be undertaken through meetings, face-to-face and virtual, and through detailed comment and feedback on written work.

## **Contact time**

FT students can expect 30 hours of supervision from the team which will include supervisory meetings and other contact but also time spent on providing feedback on written work.

PT students can expect 20 hours of supervision from the team which will include supervisory meetings and other contact but also time spent on providing feedback on written work.

## **Independent self-study**

A PhD student is expected to engage extensively in independent self-study. A FT student should expect to work up to 37 hours per week on their programme of research and a PT student up to 18.5 hours per week; some of this time will involve engagement with the PG Cert, the Research Student Development Programme and with supervision but this will vary week to week and year to year.

## Teaching staff

The PG Cert, and associated Research Student Development Programme, is delivered by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course. The core team is:

- Dr Charlotte Taylor, Lecturer in Researcher Development (Course Leader)
- Professor Erica Bowen. Director of Research & KE, College of Business, Psychology & Sport

They will be supported by professors and other senior researchers across the University, particularly in the delivery of subject specific research skills, approaches and methods.

Supervisory teams are required collectively to bring the expertise and experience to guide and support the student through their programme of research.

## 14 Assessment Strategy

### Researcher Development Programme

All research degree students are expected to engage in a programme of training and development as they progress through their research degree. This programme will provide students with the general and subject-specific knowledge, skills and behaviours to support them in the completion of their research degree. More than this, however, it will contribute to continuing professional development in whatever career they may be planning beyond the research degree.

The Researcher Development Programme (RDP) is organised around 8 thematic “clusters”, consisting of modules and workshops delivered by subject specialists from across the University and the dedicated Researcher Development Team as well as a suite of online courses.

At the beginning of the research degree, students will be allocated to [Pathway 1](#) or [Pathway 2](#) of the programme depending on the student’s experience and knowledge as a researcher. This will determine which elements of the programme are core and which are optional. The expectation is that students will engage fully with the core elements but will pick and choose from the optional elements dependent on their own needs.

For the purposes of the RDP, the research degree is divided into three stages:

- Stage One: starting out – normally equivalent to Year 1 full time of the PhD or Years 1-2 part time
- Stage Two: moving forward – normally equivalent to Year 2 full time of the PhD or Years 3-4 part time
- Stage Three: reaching your goal - normally equivalent to Year 3-4 full time of the PhD or Years 5-6 part time

### ***Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods***

The Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in Research Methods is a 60 credit, level 7 award and is mandatory for all students on Pathway 1.

Students on Pathway 2 who wish to take the PG Cert should identify this as soon as possible at the beginning of their studies. Recognition of Prior Learning may be possible for elements of the PG Cert for those on Pathway 2.

### Supervision

The student is expected to meet with his/her Director of Studies (DoS) and the rest of the supervisory team on a regular and agreed basis. Supervisors are experts in the field in which the student has selected his/her topic for research. A DoS will provide a wide range of informal advice on strategies for research and exercise the chief influence upon the student's learning.

### Monitoring of Progress and Assessment Strategies

The student is required to keep a record of all formal meetings with his/her supervisors, which is submitted after the meeting, for amendment and agreement by the supervisor(s). Copies of this record should be submitted to the Research School.

The student is encouraged to maintain a file of his/her personal/professional development and is provided with various tools to do so.

The student is required to gain approval for his/her research proposal at the beginning of the programme. A project proposal of 2500 words is reviewed by two expert reviewers and refined in response to comments, before being submitted to the University's Research Degrees Board for approval. The Board may approve without significant changes or may request that specified changes be made and the project proposal be considered again in light of these changes.

The student is required to complete an annual monitoring report in conjunction with his/her DoS which outlines progress, provides details of significant changes to the approved project and sets out any training undertaken. The report is reviewed by an Institute Research Degrees Co-ordinator during the annual monitoring interview with the student.

All students who wish to undertake a PhD are initially enrolled on the MPhil/PhD transfer route. In order to upgrade to PhD, the student must submit a substantial piece of written work, normally a draft chapter, and must undergo a 90 minute interview with his/her supervisory team chaired by an experienced member of UW's academic staff who is **not** part of the team. During this interview he/she must give a presentation of up to 30 minutes outlining how his/her work will meet the requirements of a PhD and subsequently must answer the questions of the panel.

The interview panel will provide comments on the process and will recommend one of the following to Research Degrees Board:

- the student be upgrade to PhD
- the student be upgrade to PhD subject to a satisfactory response to the Panel's comments
- the student not be upgraded at this time but may resubmit for transfer at a later date
- the student not be upgraded and submit for an MPhil
- the student be withdrawn from their programme of study

## **15 Programme structures and requirements**

For students on Pathway 1, the programme consists of a taught Postgraduate Certificate, a series of optional workshops plus a written thesis. For students on Pathway 2, the programme consists of a series of core workshops, optional workshops and a written thesis.

### Researcher Development Programme

Please refer to the Programme Specifications for RTP401 and RTP402 and the Programme Handbook

### Thesis

Below are the minimum and maximum word lengths for a thesis in science, including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices and the bibliography:

Doctorate – text based thesis

minimum 30,000 words  
maximum 40,000 words

Below are the minimum and maximum word lengths for a thesis in the humanities, creative arts or social sciences (including business and management studies), including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices and the bibliography:

Doctorate – text based thesis	minimum 60,000 words maximum 80,000 words
Doctorate – practice based thesis	minimum 30,000 words maximum 80,000 words

## **16. QAA and professional academic standards and quality**

The programme is designed to meet with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education guidance on Research Degrees.

It also meets with the FHEQ qualification descriptors at level 7 and 8.

It has also been designed in accordance with Vitae's Researcher Development Framework

## **17. Support for students**

Students are provided with:

- direct support from their supervisory team
- support from the MPhil/PhD Course Leader for their School
- access to a wider programme of Research Student Development that builds on and scaffolds the PG Cert
- day to day support through the Research School
- access to a variety of resources through our VLE focused on research students
- training opportunities for career planning through the Research School and the Careers Service
- support through the International office for overseas students
- support through the Language Unit for International Students
- access to the Disability and Dyslexia Service
- access to wider Student Support services

## **18. Admissions**

### Admission requirements

For PhD:

- A Postgraduate Masters Degree in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed programme of study; or
- First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree or equivalent award in an appropriate discipline; or
- The applicant has appropriate research or professional experience at postgraduate level which has resulted in published work, written reports or other appropriate evidence of achievement.

### Recognition of Prior Learning

Students with relevant previous study at postgraduate level or with extensive experience may be considered eligible for recognition of prior learning for elements of the embedded PG Cert (see relevant programme specification).

### Admissions policy

Students will in some cases discuss their research interests and potential research project informally with potential supervisors prior to submitting an application. This will help establish, for both parties, that staff have the necessary expertise to supervise the proposal and to identify whether the intended research project would require additional, available resources.

All applications are submitted to the Research School and passed to the relevant MPhil/PhD Course Leader for initial consideration. In the application form, applicants are required to outline a research proposal for their intended project. Applications are assessed both on the selection criteria below and in terms of: the correlation between the proposed project; the students' prior experience and achievement; and the availability of necessary supervisory expertise.

Additional selection criteria will be made clear prior to an interview. Where the application has potential, an interview will be scheduled with a panel comprising two members of academic staff (as specified as an indicator of academic quality in Chapter B11: 'Research Degrees' of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education) one of whom should be the potential supervisor. Completion of an interview checklist will allow for a rigorous and measurable evaluation of the candidate's strengths and their suitability for the programme.

International applications will, initially, be checked by the Research School Manager against NARIC. Copies of all certificates will be required before an unconditional offer can be made to the student. If the application has potential, the interview procedure detailed above will be followed, with the interview conducted (e.g. via Skype if necessary).

### Admissions/selection criteria

The admission of any individual applicant to the PhD programme is judged by the proposed supervisor in conjunction with the relevant MPhil/PhD Course Leader who acts as admissions tutor. Those judgements may be supported, as appropriate, by other members of academic staff, the Research School, and the International Office.

Where an offer is made, details of the offer and conditions are passed back to the Research School where a comprehensive offer letter and contract are produced. For international students, the information and offer conditions are passed to the relevant personnel in Student Services who can also provide the student with additional support and guidance (for example, to obtain a visa, accommodation).

All international applicants are checked for their competency in English language by the Language Centre. When it is felt that the applicant does not possess the appropriate level of English language, an in-house English language course may be recommended before the student embarks on the PhD.

An offer of a place on the PhD will be made when the following conditions are satisfied:

- The applicant meets the specified entry requirements.
- The School has the supervisory capacity and expertise to support the research project outlined in the application form.
- The proposal outlined has the potential to become a viable research project both at doctoral level (i.e. in accordance with QAA descriptors) and with regard to the context of the subject area and the School's existing research expertise and strategic priorities.

## **19. Regulation of assessment**

The embedded PG Cert operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework (see separate programme specification).

The PhD programme operates under the Research Degree Regulatory Framework (RDRF).

### Examination Arrangements

The Director of Studies must identify examiners for the PhD who must then be approved by Research Degrees Board. There should be at least 2 but no more than 3 independent examiners. At least one examiner must be external to the University in all cases but where the regulations

require it the whole panel must be external. The panel must also have the expertise and experience as set out in the regulations.

Examination arrangements must be submitted a minimum of three months in advance of the proposed date of the viva voce and considerably earlier for a PhD involving practice.

### Examination

Each examiner is required to read and assess the thesis and to submit an independent preliminary report to the University before any viva voce is held. As part of that assessment, each examiner must consider whether the thesis or portfolio and critical overview provisionally satisfies the University's requirements for the degree concerned and, where possible, make an appropriate provisional decision, subject to the outcome of the viva voce examination.

The panel for the viva voce will consist of the same examiners and an independent chair who oversees the conduct of the viva. The Director of Studies or other supervisor may attend but not participate with the permission of the student.

### Examination Outcomes

Following the viva and based on assessment of the thesis and the student's performance at the viva, the examiners will decide on one of the following outcomes:

- a) that the student be awarded a PhD
- b) that the student be awarded a PhD, subject to amendments being made to the thesis or critical overview to the satisfaction of the examiners, the timeframe of which will be decided by the examiners but shall not exceed 6 months;
- c) that the student be permitted to resubmit for a PhD and to be reassessed taking into account the amendments as identified by the examiners, with or without a *viva voce* within 12 months;
- d) that the student be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be reassessed;
- e) that the student be awarded the Degree of MPhil with no further corrections;
- f) that the student be permitted to resubmit for the Degree of MPhil and to be reassessed taking into account the amendments as identified by the examiners, with or without a *viva voce* within 12 months.

Where amendments required, these will be provided in detail by the examiners.

Where the outcome is the degree not be awarded, the examiners are required to prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis or portfolio and critical overview and give the reasons for their decision, to be forwarded to the student by the University.

Where the examiners cannot reach an agreement on the outcome, they must submit separate reports based on which the University will reach a decision.

### Reassessment

In outcome c) and f) the student is subject to reassessment. The reassessment can be based on a revised thesis alone or by the thesis and a new viva as determined by the examiners.

The possible outcomes at re-assessment are:

After re-assessment, the Examination Panel shall only be permitted to recommend to the University the following:

- a) that the student be awarded a PhD
- b) that the student be awarded a MPhil with no further corrections;
- c) that the student be awarded the Degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners the timeframe of which will be decided by the examiners but shall not exceed 10 months;

- d) that the student be not awarded the degree and that no further assessment of the work is possible.

There is no further opportunity for reassessment.

## **20. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers**

The programme is designed to develop core research and transferable skills and to enhance the employability of the student within an academic and research context but also outside of this context.

**Please note:** This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods can be found in associated course documentation e.g. course handbooks, module outlines and module specifications,