

Introduction: How we can help you

Expectations at British universities are for MPhil and PhD applications to begin to address: the area for research, why that area, and the suggested approach or approaches to that area.

In short: we need to know what you want to research, but also a little bit about the specifics of your proposed research.

First steps

We engage in a process of support and feedback to help you in the preparation of your application. We are always happy to receive informal inquiries (to Dr Benjamin Halligan, Director of the Doctoral College: b.halligan@wlv.ac.uk), and happy to meet and talk about your proposed research too. We can also support you via Skype or telephone conference call – please email for details.

Please do spend some time on our website, and identify academics and research groups that would be able to support you during your proposed research. We offer a wide range of subjects, internationally noted academics, excellent facilities, and world-leading research, and we would like you to be part of that environment.

The application form

When making your PhD or MPhil application, in addition to completing your personal information and qualifications you will be asked to outline the topic that you wish to research in a 'Research Statement'.

What to include in your Research Statement?

We recommend that you include the following in your research statement:

- ◆ A draft **title**
- ◆ A clear statement of the **aims and objectives** of the proposed research
- ◆ A brief **literature review** (noting the key writing in the area, perhaps as primary and secondary literature)
- ◆ Outline of the **scope** of your research
- ◆ Outline of the intended **methodology** (which academic discipline/s will you be looking to? Which body or bodies of theoretical work will inform your approach?)
- ◆ If relevant, an outline of the nature of the **field work** you intend to conduct
- ◆ A brief outline, if relevant, of any **professional work experience** you may have, and whether (and if so how) this connects with the proposed research
- ◆ A note on the **resources** that may be needed
- ◆ For practice-based research in Humanities subjects: proposed areas for your **creative practice**

Example

So if you wished to look at the effectiveness of representations of healthy lifestyles in children's television programmes in South America, a number of questions can be raised. Has anyone else engaged in this research? If so, what more now needs to be done? Does your research then hold the potential to break new ground and so generate new knowledge?

Any proposed research will need to engage with published writing already in the field. You will need to note this writing in your research statement: who are the key authors / thinkers? What groups of experiments / investigations have already occurred in the area that you are looking to? It may be easier to divide this writing into "Primary Sources" and "Secondary Sources".

Tip: Use "Google Scholar" (<https://scholar.google.co.uk/>) to quickly hunt down references to academic writing already published in your area!

At the same time, you would need to begin to discuss possible ways in which you intend to analyse the material.

- ◆ Will you use questionnaires? If so, which approaches to questionnaires, and why these approaches?
- ◆ Will you use textual analysis of the programmes themselves? If so, which approaches to textual analysis could prove to be the most useful?
- ◆ Are you intending to conduct interviews? If so, what kind of information will you try to gain from interviews?
- ◆ Are you using a chemical technique – if so, what is it, and how might it produce the results you want?
- ◆ Have these methods been used for other published studies – and does their use by others confirm the effectiveness of your chosen method for your proposed research? Or is it a matter of talking about the need to change or enhance a certain method that is already familiar to others working in the field?

In short: the expectation is that you will begin to suggest a possible method for your research – that is, your methodology.

These questions will determine the structure of the proposed research. How do you propose to divide up the three years (for full-time PhD research)? This can be done in blocks of six months, and typically fieldwork would occur during the second year.

This will offer us a suggested timeline for the research, so that we can see how, after the three years are up, you'll be able to submit your thesis for examination. Please note that this would only be a draft timeline, and subject to change further to discussions with your supervisor team once research has begun.

We would typically expect a draft title for the research. But this does not need to be definitive: we will not hold you to using this title, if you later decide on the need to change it. And the title can, at this early stage, just be descriptive: "A study of...", "An investigation into...", "An examination of...", "A new approach to..."

We are keen to hear something about you as well, in terms of your academic and professional experiences.

- ◆ How do these experiences inform the research you are proposing?
- ◆ If you completed or are completing a Masters, what experiences have you gained that will enable you to research further?
- ◆ Does the proposed research arise from your work on your Masters?
- ◆ If you come with professional experience, is the proposed research building on the abilities you have gained in non-academic environments?

What happens next?

When we have received your application we will be back in touch once we have reviewed it. This typically takes about 3 weeks.

We will offer you formative feedback and, if are able to accept your application, we will ask you to complete a full Research Proposal. We will offer you support and guidance for this.

Once the Research Proposal has been accepted, we will be happy to issue you a formal offer letter for a place to study with us. You will be able to begin your studies with us during any month of the year.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Examples of PhDs recently awarded by the University:

Faculty of Arts, Business & Social Sciences

- ◆ The emergence of the documentary real within relational and post-relational political aesthetics
- ◆ The American Civil War and the British Imperial Dilemma
- ◆ Injury incidence and severity in professional ballet dancers over three years
- ◆ Multi-sensory appreciation and practice: A somaesthetic approach to the exploration of taste smell and touch in food-based art

Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing

- ◆ Developing and integrating cultural competence into nursing education curricular: A qualitative grounded theory approach
- ◆ Perceptions of the influence of adults other than teachers on PE and school sport in West Midlands Primary Schools
- ◆ Trait emotional intelligence: Evaluating the theoretical construct, its relationship to other psychological variables, and potential interventions to enhance it

Faculty of Science and Engineering

- ◆ Characterisation of potential replacements for nickel compounds used in decorative chromium plating
- ◆ A framework for land information management in Ghana
- ◆ A knowledge management framework for reducing the cost of poor quality on construction projects

Further reading:

“Writing a PhD Research Proposal”

<https://www.studential.com/postgraduate/study/PhD/writing-a-research-proposal>

“Writing a Good PhD Research Proposal”

<https://www.findaphd.com/advice/finding/writing-phd-research-proposal.aspx>

“How to Write a PhD Proposal with 5 Tips”

<https://www.pandadoc.com/how-to-write-a-phd-proposal>