

## **GUIDANCE NOTES: APPLYING FOR PhD STUDY**

‘A doctor’s degree historically was a licence to teach – meaning to teach in a university as a member of faculty. Nowadays this does not mean that becoming a lecturer is the only reason for taking a doctorate [...] The concept stems, though, from the need for a faculty member to be an authority, in full command of the subject right up to the boundaries of current knowledge, and able to extend them.’ (Phillips & Pugh, *How to get a PhD*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2006).

Doctoral research leading to the award of a PhD degree is a major undertaking. For a full-time student the PhD is a minimum of three years, and very often students require an additional fourth year for ‘writing up’. For part-time students the PhD is likely to take between five and six years. Inevitably, it is important you genuinely wish to commit yourself to this level and duration of study, and that you are sufficiently motivated to explore your own specific research topic.

For the award of PhD, research students must demonstrate:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship, or 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.

Given the importance attached to ‘original research’, the School wish to support PhD candidates who have the potential to achieve high quality research, and who can evidence informed and innovative thinking, as well as possess strong motivation and an ability to manage research independently.

## Winchester School of Art

Winchester School of Art offers an interdisciplinary, research-led environment for full- and part-time postgraduate research students from a range of areas of art, design and global culture. We welcome applications for both practice- and non-practice-based PhD research in Fine Art, Graphic Arts, Media, Fashion, Textiles, and Art and Design Management. As part of a vibrant research-intensive University, cross-disciplinary engagement is encouraged and many of our PhD students extend their research across academic disciplines and collaborate with researchers in related areas of the creative arts. NB. Our main intake of new students is in the Autumn Semester for the start of the new academic term (in October), when we offer our main Welcome and Induction day. However we do also offer an induction at the start of the Spring Semester (in February).

For the University's Code of Practice and regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy see:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/calendar/sectionv/index.page>

For up-to-date details of how to apply, entry requirements, and fees, please consult all information available online:

[https://www.southampton.ac.uk/wsa/postgraduate/research\\_degrees.page](https://www.southampton.ac.uk/wsa/postgraduate/research_degrees.page)

### Contacts

*For all administrative queries, including admissions information, please contact:*

#### **Graduate School Office**

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Southampton

Highfield Campus

Southampton, SO17 1BJ

**Tel: +44 (0)23 8059 7433**

**Email: [fah-pgr-apply@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:fah-pgr-apply@southampton.ac.uk)**

*For academic enquiries, including preliminary discussion of research proposals contact:*

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## **Supervision, Progress & Training**

As a research student you will be supervised by leading academic specialists and you will have access to excellent workshops, study areas and media facilities. Regular seminars, guest speakers, master classes and proximity to the cultural and professional life of nearby London make this a vibrant centre for international postgraduates.

Over the course of the first year you will refine your research focus and scope, working closely with your supervisors. Within the first 18 months to two years of full-time registration (between 2-3 years part-time) you will be required to present your work for Confirmation. This is an important milestone in the candidature. It involves preparing a written document and presenting at an internal viva with members of staff at the School (but who are not directly involved in the supervision of your work). The viva panel assesses your capability to complete the degree within your remaining candidature. You will be questioned on the content of your presentation and have an opportunity to gain valuable feedback. Upon successful completion you will then proceed to complete your research and to submit your final thesis for examination at viva with an internal and an external examiner, both of whom with specialisms pertinent to your area of research.

### **Training**

Your training will cover research project management, preparation for examination and publication, as well as technical and practical skills appropriate to your project. You will also take part in regular research seminars, and you will be encouraged to play an active role in developing exhibitions, events and research outputs. You can present your research at annual conferences and can participate in inter-university symposia and other national and international academic events and exhibitions. You will also have access to regular lectures, seminars and guest speaker events held at the School and across the University more widely.

Your supervisory team will work with you to identify the research skills training you need and this will be available through a range of programmes offered within the School and through the University's Doctoral College:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/doctoral-college/index.page>

### **Supervision**

Research students have a minimum of two supervisors, of whom one may take a lead role. Meetings with your supervisors take place on a regular basis, month by month, throughout your candidacy; and often with greater frequency at the beginning and end of the research process. Nonetheless, it is the student's responsibility to pursue their

research independently and with a view to becoming an 'authority' on their chosen topic in the future. Supervision can also be maintained by e-mail, phone and video conference during periods when your research may require you to be away from the School, such as for fieldwork or conference and workshop events.

Supervisors ensure that research projects are original (a compulsory requirement for PhD research), significant and can be completed in a realistic time frame. They guide students towards the most appropriate research methods for the topic under consideration, and help to communicate findings with clarity and impact.

To consider who might provide suitable supervision, view our list of supervisors online: <http://blog.soton.ac.uk/wsapgr/supervisors/>

### **Professional Development**

We seek to provide candidates with the opportunity to develop a portfolio of relevant skills. Many students will be offered the chance to teach, either assisting an experienced course convenor, or leading elements and modules themselves. Intensive mentoring is part of the experience offered.

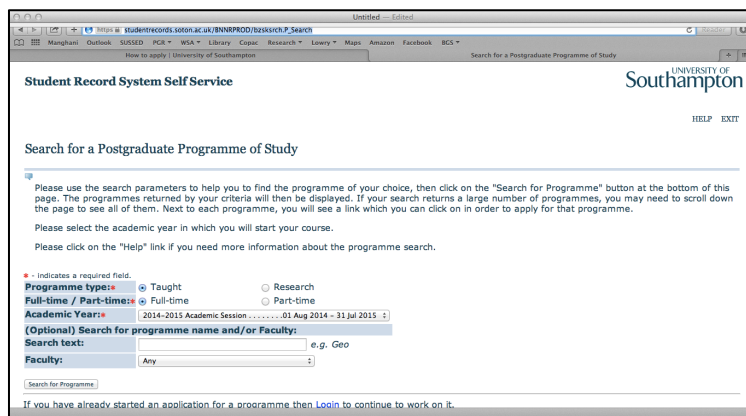
Supervision and PhD seminars also provide forums to advise students on career development, especially in publishing or exhibiting their work in appropriate places, attending conferences, making contacts, and developing their professional skills. Students are encouraged to participate in the intellectual life of the School, and to collaborate with other candidates at Winchester and across the University.

Postgraduate research provides an important step in one's professional career, whether seeking to continue academic research in higher education or by enhancing one's vision and leadership for work within a wide range of professional roles in the creative and cultural industries.

To find out more about the programme and the work of current PhD research candidates at the School, see: <http://blog.soton.ac.uk/wsapgr/>

## Application process

Before making a formal application it is often useful to prepare an initial proposal and to look carefully at all of the available information as outlined in this document and available online. It is advisable to begin the online application process as early as possible as you can save your progress as you go and the system will prompt you for all of the required documentation. We also strongly advise you to view the profiles of current research staff to consider who might provide suitable supervision. Please feel free to contact us to discuss your research interests. NB. We cannot guarantee all staff members will be available for your specific supervision, and it is the School's decision as to the final make-up of a supervision team.



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Student Record System Self Service' page for the University of Southampton. The page is titled 'Search for a Postgraduate Programme of Study'. It includes instructions on how to use the search parameters and a form with the following fields:

- Programme type:** Radio buttons for 'Taught' (selected) and 'Research'.
- Full-time / Part-time:** Radio buttons for 'Full-time' (selected) and 'Part-time'.
- Academic Years:** A dropdown menu showing '2014-2015 Academic Session' with a date range of '01 Aug 2014 - 31 Jul 2015'.
- Search text:** A text input field with the placeholder 'e.g. Geo'.
- Faculty:** A dropdown menu with 'Any' selected.

At the bottom of the form is a 'Search for Programme' button. A note at the very bottom states: 'If you have already started an application for a programme then Login to continue to work on it.'

All applications for PhD research need to be submitted via the University's Online Application Form: [https://studentrecords.soton.ac.uk/BNNRPROD/bzsksrch.P\\_Search](https://studentrecords.soton.ac.uk/BNNRPROD/bzsksrch.P_Search)

The form is part of the University's Student Record System. Upon successful application, you are able to continue to use the system to apply for all central University services as part of formally enrolling as a student at the University of Southampton. NB. Winchester School of Art is a School within the University's Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

To proceed with your online application:

- Select 'Research' for programme type.
- Select either full- or part-time as required.
- Use the drop down menu to select the academic year for when you wish to start. You should select the year of study that best reflects when you wish to start, but exact start dates can be negotiated later on. NB. There is no specific deadline for PhD research applications, but when scholarships are on offer a deadline for applications will be clearly stated on the School website.
- Select 'Faculty of Arts and Humanities' for faculty.

Having made the above selections, click on 'Search for Programme'. You will be provided with a list of course titles within the Faculty. You can currently study for the award of Doctor of Philosophy at Winchester School of Art via either the PhD Design or PhD Fine Art programmes. These are generic course titles. We accept PhD proposals related to a wide range of research areas, subject to appropriate supervision within the School, and which includes both practice- or non-practice-based research across the areas of art, design, media, fashion, textiles, and art-based management subject (such as luxury branding). For full details of appropriate subject areas consult the Winchester School of Art homepage and/or contact research staff at the School. To proceed with your application click on 'Apply online' and follow the on-screen instructions.

As a part of completing the online application form, applicants need to upload various supporting documentation. All documents should preferably be in PDF format. You will need to provide: a research proposal; academic transcripts and degree certificates; CV and personal statement; two reference letters; and a portfolio of work ( if applying for practice based research) or sample of written work (if non practice based research). International students need to provide an English language certificate (IELTS or equivalent) if available. If you need clarification on any of these matters please contact the Graduate School Office in the first instance.

For further details on how to apply consult the information available online:

<http://blog.soton.ac.uk/wsapgr/apply-for-phd/>

## Research Proposal

In addition to your CV and the documents required for the faculty admissions procedure, a crucial component of your application is the Research Proposal. This needs to outline the project you wish to pursue for your PhD study. Practice-based research proposals must also be accompanied by a folio of images and/or documentation of previous work, with contextual commentary (submit in PDF format).

A research proposal will typically be of between 5-10 pages and should demonstrate the following three key features of your research (which echo the requirements of PhD study noted above):

- **Originality:** how does your project contribute to human knowledge? How does it provide new knowledge, new tools, or new ideas?
- **Significance:** what implications does your research for other researchers, professionals or the general public? Can the findings be used by others, and in what fields?
- **Practicality:** can your project be completed in three to four years of full-time study (or equivalent part-time)?

Your research proposal is very important. It enables us to assess the quality and originality of your ideas, whether you are able to think critically, and whether you have a grasp of the relevant literature. It also tells us about the perspectives you intend to take in your research area, and helps us to assess whether we can offer a suitable supervisor for your project.

At the application stage, we are looking for clear evidence of your *potential* for successful PhD study. This must be reflected in your research proposal document. After students have started their research degree study, it is quite usual for them to refine their original proposal in light of detailed literature reviews, further consideration of research approaches as the research progresses, and comments received from the supervisors (and other academic staff).

Your proposal should include the following elements:

- **Working title:** Your title should give a clear indication of the intent of your project, directing attention explicitly to the central issue(s) that you will address.
- **Overview of research:** should provide a short overview of your research: the key issue(s) that you wish to investigate, and why these are important. You should state why you have chosen to apply to Winchester School of Art. If you want to, you can refer to the research areas and priorities of a particular research grouping or supervisor.
- **Literature review:** Show how your research fits into existing knowledge and how it adds to it. It is unlikely that you can review all the relevant literature at this stage, but you should be able to reflect some major debates and issues and to show your familiarity with some of the main works addressing the research issue that you are proposing. (**For practice-based research**, you do not need to restrict yourself to books and articles. It is also pertinent to reference artists, exhibitions and specific art practices, philosophies and processes.) In this part of the proposal, you should reference the most important texts, practices and ideas related to your proposed research/practice, demonstrate your understanding of key research issues, and identify existing gaps (both theoretical and practical) that your research is intended to address or respond to. The literature review is key to demonstrating your potential set against the two key criteria noted at the start of this document, that you can show ‘a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge’, and also that you seek to create/interpret ‘new knowledge through original research’.
- **Methodologies and theoretical understanding:** how do you plan to undertake your research? Examples might include archival, market or textual research; studio or experimental practice; interviews or ethnography. As appropriate to your research interests, you should explain what methods and theoretical approaches you intend to pursue. It is important to outline not just practical methods, but to demonstrate a wider awareness of methodology – to consider the broader philosophical understanding of how knowledge is made, organised

and framed. In this respect, research methods are not neutral. For practice-based research try to position your work within the wider fields of fine art and/or design. It is important that a practice-based PhD is not simply the pursuit of a single art 'project', but that it seeks to understand and make a body of work through a coherent and sustained practice.

- **Resources:** Will you need access to specialist equipment or training, including training in other languages or in software? Do you need to travel to conduct your research, and if so how often or for how long? Do you plan to exhibit or publish elements of your research during your candidature?
- **Timeline:** Provide a realistic time plan for completing your research degree study in three years full-time or six years part-time for a PhD.
- **Indicative list of references and sources:** You should list the main published literatures that you envisage will guide your research (with reference to the theoretical framework and/or creative practice and the substance of the research), as well any available data or resources you may draw on. For practice-based research this may include references to key artworks, exhibitions and artist documentation.

The keys to writing a strong research proposal are to:

- Clearly state and explain your research idea. This may take the form of a hypothesis or you may identify a more open-ended question or issue
- Establish the relevance and value of the proposed research question in the context of current academic thinking
- Suggest what you sort of impact your research might have, and what new areas your work might open up
- Demonstrate that your research will not take longer than three years full-time or six years part-time.
- Explain why you are qualified and capable of conducting the proposed research, and finally
- Present your proposal in a concise, unambiguous and grammatical manner.

The following materials may help in preparing your research proposal (as well as in completing your research degree):

Barrett, Estelle and Bolt, Barbara (eds.) (2010), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. IB Tauris.

Baxter, L, Hughes, C and Tight, M (2007, 3rd edn) *How to Research*. Open University Press.

Bell, J (2010, 5th edn) *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers in Education & Social Science*. Oxford University Press.

Bennett, Audrey (2006) *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design*. Princeton Architectural Press.

- Biggs, Michael and Karlsson, Henrik (eds) (2012), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. Routledge.
- Elkins, James (2014) *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*.
- Gray, Carole and Malins, Julian (2004) *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. Ashgate.
- Manghani, Sunil (2013) *Image Studies: Theory and Practice*. Routledge.
- Macleod, Katy & Holdridge, Lin (ed.) (2009) *Thinking Through Art: Reflections on Art as Research*. Routledge
- Nelson, Robin (2013) *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Philips, E and Pugh, D (2005, 4th edn) *How to get a PhD: A Handbook for Students and their Supervisors*. Open University Press.
- Sullivan, Graeme (2010) *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*, 2nd ed. Sage.
- Smith, Hazel (2009) *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press.

## Joining the PhD Programme

If your application is successful you will receive either a conditional or unconditional offer. You will be asked to respond to your offer through the Offer Holders web site. It is important that you do this as soon as possible if you decide to accept our offer.

This is because:

- We can expect your arrival and keep you informed of the activities organised for new students, such as international induction programme update, international welcome party, etc.
- You will be authorised to access services such as accommodation booking, meet and greet booking, etc.

In joining the PhD programme at Winchester School of Art we expect all doctoral candidates to play an active role in the research community. You will gain expert support from your supervisors and have access to dedicated study resources, both on-site at the School and at the University's main campus in Southampton, along with a comprehensive range of electronic resources via the University's library.