



Advice for Applicants for Enrolment to a Research Degree Programme

The doctoral process at Edge Hill University has three stages of registration (Postgraduate Certificate in Research, MPhil/PhD and PhD). Initial registration is usually on the Postgraduate Certificate in Research, however, MPhil/PhD or Direct PhD entry is possible.¹ Satisfactory completion of a research proposal and a *viva voce* examination is necessary for students to be recommended for MPhil/PhD registration. Submission of a 6,000-word transfer document, a sample chapter and successful completion of a transfer *viva* leads to PhD registration. These three phases should not be thought of as distinct, but rather as parts of a single process. The Postgraduate Certificate in Research is simply a structured approach to the first year of doctoral study; the award of a Postgraduate Certificate is only made if students exit before meeting the requirements for the award of an MPhil degree.

Edge Hill University's procedures for enrolling applicants as postgraduate students by research can be found in the Research Degrees Handbook. The following advice is intended to clarify the normal requirements for all initial applications for enrolment to a research degree programme.

Admission

Applications to study for a research degree should be made to the Graduate School Administration Office at Edge Hill. Applications should be made on the Edge Hill Registration Form for Professional Development. All applicants who are appropriately qualified, and where there is a vacancy for a research student in their chosen area, will be offered an interview.

Upon admission, a student will be formally allocated at least two supervisors who will work with the student to advise them while they develop a research proposal that, along with their performance in a *viva voce* examination, will enable them to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of the Postgraduate Certificate in Research. This is necessary to allow progression to MPhil/PhD registration.

Application Process.

Candidates for admission should complete the initial application form provided. The application form should be submitted along with a full academic CV and a document entitled 'Research Proposal', which should not exceed 2,000 words in length (excluding references). The document should not contain footnotes or endnotes.

¹ Students seeking MPhil/PhD or direct PhD entry should contact the Graduate School Administration Office in the first instance.



Candidates for admission are also asked to provide two separate independent academic references, on the form provided.

The research proposal should include:

1. A working title/question
2. A brief outline of the research problem that the study will address (not a broad area but a specific problem). This should include reference to literature and give full bibliographic references at the end of the document.
3. An outline of the relevant methodology.
4. A brief outline of the ethical issues that arise from the study.
5. An indication of the structure of the study.
6. An outline of the projected timescale of the study.

The purpose of the proposal document is to provide a basis for discussion and questioning during the interview. Applicants are encouraged to discuss the composition of the application proposal with prospective supervisors.

The criteria for judging whether to admit a candidate are:

1. Does the student understand the nature of research degrees? Do they show evidence of being able, in due course, to meet the requirements of MPhil or doctoral-level research?
2. Does the student have the academic background and appropriate skills to embark on a research degree?
3. Is the proposed project feasible?

Admission Interview.

If the proposal document is satisfactory, then you will be invited to attend Edge Hill for an admission interview. The admission interview usually lasts approximately one hour, and involves two members of staff. A member of the Research Degrees Committee chairs the interview. The second panel member is an appropriately qualified or experienced member of academic staff, who may be the prospective Director of Studies or a prospective member of the supervisory team.

Approval of admission can be given by the interview panel, through the Chair, at the end of the interview. However, revision of the proposal and/or an additional interview may be required. The Panel makes the decision to admit or decline any application.



Postgraduate Certificate in Research

The programme consists of a single, 60-credit module (CPD 4800 Postgraduate Research Studies). This has one, two-part, assessment – a 10,000-15,000-word research proposal and *viva voce* examination. The 5,000-word range in the length of the proposal is designed to accommodate disciplinary differences. Many students working on projects in science subjects will produce a final PhD thesis of 40,000 words, whereas students working in social sciences and humanities will produce an 80,000-word thesis. The research proposal should show evidence of research design, methodological reflection, a literature review, conceptual and theoretical considerations, and *where appropriate*, ethical considerations or other axiological considerations (political, aesthetic etc.).

Neither the proposal, nor the viva, will be awarded a numerical mark. Instead, students will be given a classification of 'Pass', 'Merit', 'Distinction' or 'Fail'. As the assessment is a single, two-part, assessment, only one classification will be given for the whole assessment (proposal and *viva*).

An unusual feature of this module is the fact that while the Award is distinct from the programme, the programme and the module are one and the same. The aim here is to avoid being overly prescriptive and to allow supervisory teams to act as guides in each case.

An extensive programme of training sessions is available and additional material is provided through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Training sessions will be delivered by the most appropriate people in each case; this will usually include staff from the various academic departments. The design of the provision recognises an important distinction between properly generic matters in research student training – the nature of the doctorate, the *viva*, time management, writing skills etc. and pseudo-generic matters such as ethics, epistemology, critical, theoretical and conceptual analysis.

The programme of training will be delivered in one and two-day events (to allow part-time students maximum opportunity to attend). These events will take place at least once per month for the first six months of the programme. The front-loaded nature of this provision is the most appropriate approach as a result of:

- A. The need to allow students a period of time to devote attention solely to their research.
- B. The need to allow time for completion of the research proposal.
- C. The submission deadline.

Students will also be provided with an opportunity to present a summary of their work to an audience of peers and supervisors, and to gain experience of answering questions addressing issues raised by their work.



Level 7 Programme Learning Outcomes (CPD 4800)

Knowledge and Understanding

At the conclusion of this programme, students will be able to:

Substantiate their knowledge and understanding of the research methodology/methodologies appropriate to the design of their postgraduate research.

Formulate critically and/or theoretically informed evidence that they have developed their critical awareness, subject knowledge and capacity for reflection in their role as self-directed learners.

Assemble evidence that verifies their acquisition of the skills necessary for research practice and project development.

Demonstrate sensitivity to, and understanding of, axiological factors apposite to their research in the design of their project.

Intellectual Skills

Construct and support an articulate and scholarly argument at postgraduate level using a broad range of relevant material(s).

Critically reflect on the choices and project development skills necessary to develop a research project within their discipline or field of study.

Demonstrate sound intellectual abilities of appraisal, reflection and evaluation in skills acquisition and knowledge development.

Express cogently their capacity for advanced critical, theoretical and/or conceptual reflection upon subject matter related to their area of study.

Practical Skills

Demonstrate their capacity to plan autonomous research into pertinent subject matter, deploying critical or theoretical approaches appropriate to their research project.

Produce a research project that establishes clearly their ability to apply their knowledge and skills to research methodology and to the design of their research activity.

Provide rigorous and convincing evidence that they have a feasible project for a postgraduate degree by research.

Transferable Skills

Write cogently in an academic context at a level appropriate to postgraduate study.

Communicate an advanced ability to defend their proposed research design rigorously.



Enrolment

When a research student is admitted to Edge Hill, s/he must enrol with the institution using the appropriate form, which will be issued by the Graduate School Administration Office. This form should be completed and returned immediately as access to the University Library and ICT facilities is dependent upon formal enrolment. This enrolment form is re-issued annually in the summer, and students should check the information contained within it, make amendments as necessary, and return it to the Graduate School Administration Office as soon as is possible.

The maximum period of registration on the Postgraduate Certificate in Research is 12 months from the point of admission for both full-time and part-time students.

The minimum and maximum periods of registration for MPhil and PhD are as follows:

Award	Minimum	Expected	Initial Maximum	Absolute maximum +
<i>MPhil</i>				
Full-time	12 months	24 months	36 months	48 months
Part-time	24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months
<i>PhD (inclusive of MPhil registration period where appropriate)</i>				
Full-time	24 months	36 months	48 months	72 months
Part-time	36 months	48 months	72 months	84 months

+subject to annual extensions approved by the Research Degrees Committee.

FINANCE ISSUES

Details of the current annual fees are available from the Graduate School Administration Office.

Self-funding Students

Self-funding students will be invoiced automatically on an annual basis for the MPhil/PhD supervision fee. This fee includes all registration and validation charges, and is set on an annual basis. Payment should be made directly to the Finance Office at Edge Hill in accordance with instructions issued with the invoice. If students are sponsored by another body, they should ensure that this information is included on the enrolment form which is completed each year.



Payment by Instalments

It is possible to pay your fees by instalments. However, it is important to remember that payment by instalment can only be made by means of a standing order which must be set up by the Finance Department.