What is a research degree?

A research degree Master (MPhil) or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) involves training in research methods and the execution of a piece of supervised research - the systematic high level study of a problem or topic and the presentation of the results in the form of a written thesis. Candidates will work closely with a supervisory team consisting of a Director of Studies (lead supervisor) and at least one additional Co-supervisor based at the University. If the research degree programme involves a collaborating establishment an external supervisor may be appointed from the establishment.

Following the submission of the research degree thesis, the candidate will be examined orally on the programme of work and on the field of study in which the programme lies. A research degree is time consuming and demanding, persistence and dedication are needed to bring it to a successful completion.

What is the difference between a research degree and a taught postgraduate degree?

A taught Masters degree (normally an MA, MSc or MEd) is an award granted on the basis of a taught course offered by an institution as a common experience. A research degree is awarded on the basis of an individually initiated and registered research programme. The programme is built around a supervised thesis on a substantial piece of work, which has to show evidence of originality (PhD only) and contain material worthy of publication. It also involves an element of research training through generic courses and taught modules and/or courses.

What is the difference between the degrees of MPhil and PhD?

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

MPhil candidates are expected to critically investigate an approved topic and to demonstrate an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field. They should show originality in the application of knowledge, and understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. The demands of originality and sustained systematic enquiry are less than those required for PhD.
The average period of study for an MPhil is 2 years in full time mode and 3 years in part time mode. The length of an MPhil thesis is between 20,000 and 40,000 words depending on the subject area.

**Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

PhD candidates are expected to critically investigate an approved topic and to demonstrate an understanding of research methods appropriate to their chosen field. The investigation should result in the creation and interpretation of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline and makes an original contribution to knowledge.

The average period of study for a PhD is 3 years full time or 4-5 years part time. The length of a PhD thesis is between 40,000 and 80,000 words depending on the subject area.

**What are the entry qualification requirements?**

The normal entry requirement for a research degree is a UK honours degree (first or upper second class) or a UK Masters degree or a qualification which is regarded as equivalent. Candidates with other qualifications are considered on their merits. In such cases the University seeks evidence of academic ability, which might, for example, be demonstrated by publications or by other means.

To support your application you should submit with your application form, full curriculum vitae together with any other supporting evidence and two academic or professional references.

**How long does it take to obtain a research degree?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Mode of Study</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>3.5 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPhil</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**English Language Competency**

Where English is not the first language, all students must satisfy the University requirements regarding proficiency of both written and spoken English. Students must have a minimum test result of 6.5 from the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or equivalent. Also a score of at least 6 is required for all of the test components.

If the applicant has studied in an English speaking country, a University assessment can be made of the language proficiency without IELTS or equivalent confirmation.
The applicant must be proficient in listening and understanding spoken English; writing (usually verified through the research proposal) and speaking English. This assessment will be undertaken during the interview with the applicant prior to admission. A conditional offer can be issued to applicants who have not yet reached the minimum standard of English language competency. Applicants may wish to attend the University’s English for Academic Purposes programme for further tuition.

Is it possible to register on a ‘distance learning’ research degree programme?

The University has, for a number of years, registered candidates for the degrees of MPhil and PhD by distance learning. A distance learning programme is one where the candidate concerned is not based at the University, and is undertaking his/her research from a distant (normally overseas) base, with a supervision team comprising supervisors from the University.

Mode of Study
Candidates may study on a full-time or a part-time basis.

Tuition Fees
The calculation of fees for part time and full time research programmes leading to the awards of MPhil or PhD degree by distance study is based on a set minimum tuition fee for Overseas and Home students. However, the Academic Dean of Faculty may decide that additional costs are necessary due to the particular nature of each programme. Please refer to the Distance Learning Guidelines on the University web site for further information — http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/research/researchservices/graduateresearchsupport/researchsupervisorsandstudentshandbook/policydocuments/

Communication with and visits to the University
The candidate will be required to attend the University regularly. The candidate will be required to be in regular and frequent contact with the supervisory team; particularly the Director of Studies (first supervisor). This will entail regular and frequent communication by email, telephone, and skype.

The student must visit the University to attend the Postgraduate Development Training programme, to meet with the supervisors and to take part in the Annual Monitoring Review meeting. A timetable for these sessions will be provided on request. The requirement to attend the University for training sessions and annual reviews is an absolute minimum requirement and must be adhered to for the student’s registration to continue. It is likely that this will entail at least 2 to 3 visits per year (of one week duration each time) to the University.

When the candidate is to visit the University he/she must be prepared, and able, to meet the costs of this.
The final examination will always take place at the University of Sunderland.

**Qualifications**

Distance students must satisfy the same qualification entry requirements as any other research degree candidate. That is, they should normally possess at least an upper second class honours degree from a UK University or its equivalent. The Graduate Research Support office will verify the equivalence of qualifications.

If the candidate does not satisfy the normal criteria then two acceptable academic references must be obtained. At least one of the referees should be familiar with the standards required of a UK research degree. The candidate should provide a full curriculum vitae and any other supporting evidence to support the application with the application form. The documentation will then be considered and a decision will be made on the candidate’s suitability for admission.

**Research Development and Training**

**Attendance at development and training events on Campus.**
The first event lasts for 4 days and is held at the beginning of the programme, all students are strongly encouraged to attend this induction programme.
The second event lasts for 2 days and takes place at the end of year 1 or beginning of year 2 and the third event lasts for 3 days and is held near the end of the programme.
The training is an essential part of the research degree programme and presently there is no accredited prior learning applied to opting out of the events.

**How do I apply?**

We welcome applications from students with a wide variety of backgrounds and offer supervision in numerous subject areas. To enquire about subject areas in which the University offer research programmes please follow the link below to our Research Institute pages - [https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/more/research/institutes/](https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/more/research/institutes/)

When making an application for a research degree you should complete an application form which must include a research proposal. You can apply online from the following website [https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/](https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/)

It is important to provide as much information as possible in your proposal which should be 2-3 pages in length and specify:

- The aims of the research
- The rationale for the research question(s)
- The proposed methodology and techniques for analysis
- A provisional time plan for the research
- In the case of a PhD, a statement of the original contribution to knowledge which you expect to emerge from the research.
In addition there should be an outline of the advanced knowledge already gained in the proposed research area and a summary of prior training in research methods. This can be attached as a word document at the end of the online application.

If you have already reached an agreement with your prospective academic faculty about a particular topic, you only need to provide brief details of that topic on your application form however you must also state the name of the member of staff at the University you have been in contact with.

Other documents which should accompany your application form; copies of

- Your birth certificate or a copy of the personal details page of your passport
- Qualification certificates
- English language competency certificate, if applicable;
- A letter confirming funding if provided by a sponsor
- Academic references, a curriculum vitae and any other information to support your application, if you do not hold standard qualifications (first or upper second class honours degree or equivalent)

This should be attached with your proposal at the end of the online application.

Submission of your application form

Once you have submitted your application online you will receive an e-mail confirmation. The form will then be forwarded to the appropriate Faculty to investigate whether the University can provide you with a supervisory team with the appropriate subject expertise. Your application will also be assessed against the criteria set out in the University Admission Procedures for research students.

Interview

If your application meets the requirements of the University’s Admission procedures and a supervisory team can be constituted then you will be invited on campus to attend an interview. Overseas students will not need to attend the University but will be interviewed by telephone or Skype.

Successful Applicants

If your application is successful your details will be forwarded to the Graduate Research Support Office from which an offer letter will be issued including details of enrolment and payment of tuition fees.

Please note that the University has 3 set intakes for research degree programmes, 1st October, 1st February and 1st May.
Useful contacts for administrative queries

Faculty of Business, Law and Tourism

Subject areas: Enterprise, Marketing, Law, Leadership and Professional Practice, Tourism, Hospitality and Events
Email: fblt-research@sunderland.ac.uk

Faculty of Technology

Subject areas: Computing and Engineering
Email: fot-research@sunderland.ac.uk

Faculty of Health Sciences & Well-Being

Subject areas: Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences; Nursing and Health Sciences (including Sports and Exercise Sciences); Psychology
Email: hsw-research@sunderland.ac.uk

Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries

Subject areas: Arts & Design and Media & Communication
Email: faci-research@sunderland.ac.uk

Faculty of Education and Society

Subject areas: Education, Culture and Social Sciences
Email: fesresearch@sunderland.ac.uk

Alternatively you may email, telephone or write to the relevant Research Student Manager who is an academic member of staff and is responsible for the admission of research students. The Research Student Manager will discuss any academic issues or questions you may have and any research degree opportunities that are available to you.

Research Student Managers

Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries

Arts, and Design - Professor Beryl Graham, Media Centre, St Peter’s campus
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 2896    Email: beryl.graham@sunderland.ac.uk

Media – Dr Susan Smith, Media Centre at St Peters
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 3893    Email: drsusan.smith@sunderland.ac.uk
Faculty of Business and Law

Business – Dr Hamid Seddighi, Sunderland Business School, Reg Vardy Building  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 3109  Email: hamid.seddighi@sunderland.ac.uk  

Law – Dr Caroline Gibby, Sunderland Law School, Reg Vardy Building  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 5152994  Email: caroline.gibby@sunderland.ac.uk  

Tourism, Hospitality and Events – Dr Nikolaos Pappas, Sunderland Business School, Reg Vardy Building  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 5152651  Email: nikolaos.pappas@sunderland.ac.uk  

Faculty of Education and Society

Culture – Dr Geoff Nash, School of Culture, Reg Vardy Building, St Peter’s campus  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 2156  Email: geoff.nash@sunderland.ac.uk  

Education – Dr Maddalena Taras, School of Education, Reg Vardy Building, St Peter’s campus  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 2910  Email: maddalena.taras@sunderland.ac.uk  

Social Sciences – Prof Peter Rushton, School of Social Sciences, Reg Vardy Building, St Peter’s campus  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 2280  Email: peter.rushton@sunderland.ac.uk  

Faculty of Technology

Computing, Software Big Data – Dr Sharon McDonald, School of Computing, David Goldman Informatics Centre  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 3278  Email: sharon.mcdonald@sunderland.ac.uk  

Engineering - Dr David Baglee, School of Engineering, David Goldman Building, St Peter’s campus  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 2869  Email: david.baglee@sunderland.ac.uk  

Faculty of Health Sciences & Well-Being

Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences – Dr Shafiq Ahmed, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences, Dale Building, City Campus  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 2902  Email: Shafiq.ahmed@sunderland.ac.uk  

Nursing - Dr Lewis Bingle, School of Nursing and Health Sciences, Pasteur Building, City Campus  
Tel: (+44) (0)191 515 2971  Email: lewis.bingle@sunderland.ac.uk
How much does it cost?

The current 2019/20 academic year fees are detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time Home/EU</strong></td>
<td>£4,464.00 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time Overseas</strong></td>
<td>£12,630.00 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scholarships are available for overseas students (studying on campus) for a maximum of 3 years duration for PhD programmes and 2 years for MPhil. The Scholarship will provide a reduction to the fee of £1500 per annum.

Alumni Loyalty Scheme offers 20% discount off your full time Postgraduate Study (See page 11 for further details)

Bench Fees may be added, where necessary, to fund consumables, travel and subsistence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-time (Home/EU)</strong></td>
<td>£2,681.00 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-time (Overseas)</strong></td>
<td>£7,918.00 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Please note: Overseas students can only study part time with permission from the Home Office)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD by Existing Published or Creative Work (Home/EU)</td>
<td>£3,980.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD by Existing Published or Creative Work (Overseas)</td>
<td>£4,835.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Doctorate (Home/EU)</td>
<td>£3,980.00 one payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Doctorate (Overseas)</td>
<td>£4,320.00 one payment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See website: [https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/higher-doctorate/](https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/higher-doctorate/)

Distance Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time/ Home or EU from</td>
<td>£2,681.00 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time / Overseas from</td>
<td>£7,918.00 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(the above fee is a minimum amount, additional costs may be added for travel, or administration costs).
ALUMNI LOYALTY SCHEME
FULL-TIME POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Terms and Conditions

The Scheme
We offer a 20% discount off your full or part time course fee for the duration of the standard registration period. The Alumni discount is applicable to University of Sunderland alumni (graduates) who return to study with us and enrol on a postgraduate masters course (MA, MSc, LLM, MBA, MPhil, PhD, Professional Doctorate, DBA, EdD) - excluding PGCE’s) starting in Sept/Oct 2019 and Jan/Feb 2020 and May 2020 doctorate intake only). Please note for MPhil or PhD students the discount is not applicable to additional fees.

Payments
Home/EU students
Your 20% discount will be a cash back payment by BACS.
• Jan/Feb/May starters - payment will be made in June the same year.
• Sept/Oct starters - payment will be made in Feb the following year.
BACS payments will only be made if you are actively enrolled on your course.

International students
Your discount will be 20% off your course fee which is automatically applied to eligible applicants when they enrol.

Eligibility
The scheme is open to ALL Level 5 - 8 graduates (Alumni) of the University of Sunderland. Eligible programmes are full and part-time postgraduate masters courses (MA, MSc, LLM, MBA, MPhil, PhD, Professional Doctorate, DBA, EdD - excluding PGCE’s) based at our Sunderland campuses only. The individual course pages on our website: www.sunderland.ac.uk provides price information and details on specific entry requirements.
Other degree classifications are NOT included in this offer.
To be eligible for this payment you will have received a relevant Level 5–8 qualification (on campus or TNE) from the University of Sunderland or Sunderland Polytechnic (full-time or part-time) or have successfully completed a study abroad or exchange programme at Level 5-8 in the University.
Levels are explained here: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels
The application form will ask you for your previous student number if known. Alternatively applicants can produce evidence of their University of Sunderland graduate status at enrolment. If you have an outstanding debt of £50 or more, you will not receive the scholarship payment until the debt has been cleared.

For more information contact the Helpline on 0191 5153000
or email: student.helpline@sunderland.ac.uk
How do I find out about accommodation?

We offer a great choice of accommodation for you to choose from and our rent prices are among the best value in the UK to include heating, lighting, water, fuel, Wi-Fi and personal possessions insurance.

You should apply for accommodation as soon as you have been issued an Unconditional place at the University, an accommodation pack will be sent to you. Information about accommodation generally, including halls of residence and University managed houses can be found at https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/about/accommodation/ and www.studentpad.co.uk which contains more details, photographs and specification details of all accommodation available, this includes the halls of residence; University managed houses; family accommodation; living with a family and private landlords.

Home or EU students

Please email: accommodation@sunderland.ac.uk

International students

Please email: international.accommodation@sunderland.ac.uk

Get in touch

If you wish to meet with a member of staff, please go to The Design Centre reception desk at City Campus where an Accommodation Officer will be happy to talk to you:

Accommodation Office
Design Centre
City Campus
Chester Road
Sunderland SR1 3SD

Tel: +44 (0)191 515 2943
Email: accommodation@sunderland.ac.uk
Point Based System Immigration Regulations

The UK Immigration rules have changed to a Points Based System which has 4 categories of visas which allow Non EEA/EU/Swiss Nationals to work or study in the UK.

Tier 4 (general) is specifically for students coming to the UK to study unless your course is for 6 months or less when a Student Visitor Visa will be required.

For further details please visit: https://search1.sunderland.ac.uk/s/search.html?collection=website&query=visa

and the Home Office website: www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa

If you receive an unconditional offer and you provide us with all the relevant documentation that meets the Home Office criteria, the University will provide you with a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) letter which you will need to apply for a Tier 4 visa.

All students who require a CAS letter will be required to pay a deposit of £3,500 pounds sterling to the University; the deposit will be deducted from the tuition fee.

Please note the tuition fee remaining is due for payment when you complete the enrolment process once you have arrived in the UK.

In addition, if you are already in the UK and you need to apply for an extension of your visa this will also be assessed under Tier 4 of the Points Based System.