



Programme Specification

Doctor of Philosophy {Social Sciences}[Distance Learning]

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Section 1: Key Programme Details

Part A: Programme Information

Programme title: Doctor of Philosophy {Social Sciences}[Distance Learning]

Highest award: PhD Doctor of Philosophy

Awarding institution: UWE Bristol

Teaching institutions: UWE Bristol

Study abroad: No

Year abroad: No

Sandwich year: No

Credit recognition: No

School responsible for the programme: CHSS School of Social Sciences, College of Health, Science & Society

Professional, statutory or regulatory bodies: Not applicable

Modes of delivery: Distance without attendance

Entry requirements: For the current entry requirements see the UWE public website.

For implementation from: 01 January 2026

Programme code: LL1W11

Section 2: Programme Overview, Aims and Learning Outcomes

Part A: Programme Overview, Aims and Learning Outcomes

Overview: A supervised programme of study during which the candidate learns to carry out research at a level that makes an original contribution to knowledge as

determined by experts in the field. It is based in the research community of the School and the partner institution, delivered through a dedicated supervisory team and is enriched by engagement with UWE researchers in the School, College, University, partner institution and beyond. It is assessed against nationally and internationally agreed frameworks for doctoral education.

The programme is unusual for a PhD in having a credit requirement (60 M level credits) focused on the development of professional skills guided by an individual Development Needs Analysis. Candidates will be able to access available online UWE modules, travel to UWE to study in person or may complete modules at the partner institution which can be considered for recognition towards this award through UWE's accredited learning process. The programme includes a wide range of personal and professional development opportunities, which are delivered in various formats including workshops and an online Resources Library. PhD candidates will be fully engaged with governance aspects of their research, whilst their Director of Studies has ultimate responsibility for them.

The programme is notable for the flexibility of format of final thesis that enables candidates to incorporate a variety of research outputs that have been produced during the period of registration.

Features of the programme: The programme provides the postgraduate research candidate with self directed supervised research. Support by a supervisory team which will include a Director of Studies (DoS), a UWE staff member responsible for overseeing the research project and ensuring compliance with all UWE requirements. Additionally a second and/or third supervisor based at the partner institution will provide day-to-day supervision and guidance.

It is recognised that, due to in-country requirements, some elements of the programme may become mandatory, e.g. the requirement for an element of in-person study at the partner institution or at the awarding institution. This will not impact on the candidates ability to meet the educational aims of the programme and so will be considered on a flexible and case-by-case basis in collaboration with the candidate and the partner institution.

Educational Aims: To produce independent researchers who can contribute to the generation of original knowledge in their discipline.

To produce researchers who take ownership of and can communicate the knowledge they have generated.

To produce researchers with the personal and professional skills to flourish in a range of contemporary work environments

To produce researchers with the skills to engage with all aspects of research governance.

Programme Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this programme graduates will achieve the following learning outcomes.

Programme Learning Outcomes

- PO1. The ability to conduct enquiry leading to the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship, shown by satisfying scholarly review by accomplished and recognised scholars in the field
- PO2. A critical understanding of the current state of knowledge in the relevant field of theory and/or practice
- PO3. The ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge at the forefront of the discipline or field of practice including the capacity to adjust the project design in the light of emergent issues and understandings
- PO4. A critical understanding of the methods of enquiry
- PO5. Independent judgement of issues and ideas in the field of research and / or practice and the ability to communicate and justify that judgement to appropriate audiences
- PO6. The ability to critically reflect on their work and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses including understanding validation procedures

PO7. The skills to engage with all aspects of research governance in a contemporary context

Assessment strategy: PhD candidates will be assessed using a variety of the formats that are used by professional researchers to assess research. Candidates will be required to write, discuss and present their work in a variety of ways.

In a Progression Examination candidates will write a report on the progress of their work and how it will make an original contribution to knowledge, submit it for independent review and undertake a viva voce examination to discuss it. At subsequent milestone assessments candidates will submit for review outputs from activities that they have produced in the recent phase of their research. These outputs can take a variety of forms but whatever form they take they will be used to show that they have made progress towards final submission that is commensurate with the time spent since the last review. Final submission will consist of a written thesis and a viva voce examination carried out by two experts, one a UWE member of academic staff and one an external researcher of significant standing in the field. Members of UWE staff who submit a thesis for examination will have two external examiners. The submitted thesis can incorporate research outputs that the candidates can use to help demonstrate that they meet the award criteria. The thesis must include introductory and contextual material at the start and material at the end that synthesises the work and makes the claim for original contribution to knowledge.

Student support: The Distance Learning programme will only be available to candidates recruited by or working within UWE's affiliated academic partner institutions. As such a due diligence process will have been completed to ensure that appropriate infrastructure, resources and student support and feedback mechanisms are in place.

As students registered on a UWE award, Distance Learning PhD candidates are eligible for all support services afforded to students at UWE, such as the Student's Union and UWE Wellbeing. However, given that the candidates will be located at the affiliated institution then it is expected that candidates will also be able to access all

relevant student support services at their home institution, including face-to-face wellbeing support.

Part B: Programme Structure

Year 1

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Full-time: Progress Review 1

Year 1 Optional Modules (Full time and Part time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2025-26	0

Year 1 Compulsory Modules (Full time)

Full time students complete a Progress Review at the end of Year 1.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
Progress Review 1	Progress Review 1 2025-26	0

Year 2

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Full-time: Progress Review 2 / Progress Review 3

Part-time: Progress Review 1

Year 2 Optional Modules (Full time and Part time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
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PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2026-27	0
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Year 2 Optional Modules (Full time)

Full time students complete Progress Review 2 at the end of Year 2.

Full time students that are intending to submit their thesis after 24 months will complete Progress Review 3 at the end of Year 2 instead of Progress Review 2.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
Progress Review 2	Progress Review 2 2026-27	0
Progress Review 3	Progress Review 3 2026-27	0

Year 2 Compulsory Modules (Part time)

Part time students complete the Progression Examination in Year 2 at 18 months from the start of their programme of study.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
Progress Review 1	Progress Review 1 2026-27	0

Year 3

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Full-time: Progress Review 3 / Submission of Doctoral Thesis

Part-time: Progress Review 2 / Progress Review 3

Year 3 Compulsory Modules (Part time)

Part time students complete Progress Review 2 during Year 3

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
Progress Review 2	Progress Review 2 2027-28	0

Year 3 Optional Modules (Full time and Part time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
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PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2027-28	0
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Year 3 Optional Modules (Full time)

Full time students complete Progress Review 3 and start the Doctoral Thesis

Full time students that are intending to submit after 24 months will submit the Doctoral Thesis and undertake the Final Assessment (viva) in Year 3

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
Progress Review 3	Progress Review 3 2027-28	0
THESIS	Doctoral Thesis 2027-28	0

Year 3 Optional Modules (Part time)

Part time students that are intending to submit their thesis after 36 months must also complete Progress Review 3 during Year 3.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
Progress Review 3	Progress Review 3 2027-28	0

Year 4

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Full-time: Submission of Doctoral Thesis and Final Assessment (viva)

Part-time: Progression Review 3 / Submission of Doctoral Thesis

Year 4 Optional Modules (Part time)

Part time students may undertake Progress Review 3 in Year 4

Part time students that are intending to submit their thesis after 36 months will submit the Doctoral Thesis and undertake the Final Assessment (viva) in Year 4

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
Progress Review 3	Progress Review 3 2028-29	0
THESIS	Doctoral Thesis 2028-29	0

Year 4 Optional Modules (Full time and Part time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2028-29	0

Year 4 Optional Modules (Full time)

Latest opportunity for full time students to submit the Doctoral Thesis and complete the Final Assessment (viva)

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
THESIS	Doctoral Thesis 2028-29	0

Year 5

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Part-Time: Progress Review 3 / Submission of Doctoral Thesis

Year 5 Optional Modules (Part Time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Latest opportunity for part time students to complete Progress Review 3.

Part time students may submit their Doctoral Thesis and undertake their Final Assessment (viva) in Year 5.

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2029-30	0
Progress Review 3	Progress Review 3 2029-30	0
THESIS	Doctoral Thesis 2029-30	0

Year 6

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Part-Time: start / submit Doctoral Thesis

Year 6 Optional Modules (Part time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Part time students start / may submit the Doctoral Thesis in Year 6

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2030-31	0
THESIS	Doctoral Thesis 2030-31	0

Year 7

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Part-Time: Progress Review 4 / Submission of the Doctoral Thesis and Final Assessment (viva)

Year 7 Optional Modules (Part time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Part time students may complete Progress Review 4 in Year 7

Part time students may submit the Doctoral Thesis and complete the Final Assessment (viva) in Year 7

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2031-32	0
PGR Progress Review 4	Progress Review 4 2031-32	0

THESIS	Doctoral Thesis 2031-32	0
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Year 8

A supervised programme of research designed by the supervisory team and the candidate and supported by a minimum of 60 credits at M level that can be completed, as appropriate for the candidate's study, at any time before final award.

Part-Time: Submission of Doctoral Thesis and Final Assessment (viva)

Year 8 Optional Modules (Part time)

Students on a PhD are required to take between 60 - 120 M Level credits at any time before the end of their studies.

Latest opportunity for part time students to submit the Doctoral Thesis and complete the Final Assessment (viva)

Module Code	Module Title	Credit
THESIS	Doctoral Thesis 2032-33	0
PGR Compulsory Credits	60 - 120 M Level Credits 2032-33	0

Part C: Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) Synopsis**Part D: External Reference Points and Benchmarks**

Doctoral Degree Characteristics statement (2015)

QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) and (2023), especially Advice and Guidance 'Research Degrees' but including all other themes as relevant.

QAA The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2014)

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019).

The Salzburg principles (I and II) of the European Higher Education Area,

Part E: Regulations

Approved to University Regulations and Procedures: Academic regulations and procedures for Research Degrees - Academic information | UWE Bristol