



Research Degrees in the English Department, Faculty of Arts

Research Degrees available: PhD or MPhil

Individual and collective research in the English Department covers a wide range of topics, approaches and periods. These can be grouped under 5 main areas in which the Department has particular strengths.

Early modern and eighteenth century

Literature from the nineteenth century to the present day

Creative writing

Postcolonial literatures

Book history, editing and reception studies

The department hosts 2 research groupings: the Postcolonial Literature Research Group and the Book History Research Group.

Supervision

Unlike in some other institutions, the Open University strongly encourages research students to develop their scholarly expertise under the guidance of more than one supervisor in the form of a supervisory team. Some part-time students also have an external supervisor based in an institution close to the student's residence.

Conferences for all postgraduate students in English are held annually in London, and annual Faculty conferences have also been held in recent years..

Research may be undertaken on either a full-time or a part-time basis. The majority of postgraduate students study part-time.

Period of Study

M.Phil	Full-time students – minimum one year, maximum three years Part-time students – minimum two years, maximum four years
PhD	Full-time students – minimum two years, maximum four years Part-time students – minimum three years, maximum six years

Full-time students are on 'probation' for the first year of study. At the end of that time there is a full review of progress before a recommendation is made to the Head of Department as to whether study may continue.



Part-time students are not initially registered for a specific postgraduate degree. The decision on which degree should be attempted depends on the progress made in the first two 'probationary' years. Following a probationary viva, a formal recommendation is made to the Head of Department as to which degree would be most appropriate or, in the case of insufficient progress being made, whether or not the student should continue to a research degree.

Entrance requirements

Candidates should normally hold a good honours degree in English or a related discipline, and an MA (or equivalent postgraduate qualification). Applications are welcomed for full-time or part-time research from candidates whose proposed topic is closely related to the research interests of members of the department, listed on the next page. The success of applications will depend in part on the availability of appropriate supervision. The application should include a summary (about 1000 words) of the applicant's research proposal, clearly outlining their aims, the scope and the method of enquiry they wish to pursue and including a brief bibliography indicating how the topic relates to other published work in the field of study. The proposal will need to be detailed and well thought out, and candidates should consider carefully whether they will have enough time to work for a higher degree, and whether they will be able to arrange access to the library facilities and other resources they will need. As well as information about their higher education and professional qualifications, they should also indicate any experience of independent research, or any experience that might be particularly relevant to work of this kind. A sample of any previous postgraduate work successfully completed should be included (e.g. a chapter from an MA or M Phil).

Applicants for a PhD in Creative Writing should be experienced writers of proven talent, preferably with an MA in the subject or with some publications. Project proposals should be for a novel or collection of stories as the core of the research with an accompanying dissertation which can either be a critical essay contextualising the work with others in its genre or an exploration of the processes involved in its creation. The two parts of the thesis must cohere and illuminate each other and both also need to be original in order to meet the PhD criterion of 'contributing to new knowledge'. The finished fiction must achieve publishable standard as determined by supervisors and examiners. A crucial part of the application is a substantial sample of the applicant's previous creative writing, at least 10,000 words of prose fiction. (N.B. Journalism or academic writing should not be sent). Suitable applicants would be encouraged to apply for external funding.



Research facilities

Full-time students enjoy excellent library, office and computing facilities at the Open University headquarters at Milton Keynes. Both full-time and part-time students have access to many on-line resources at the Open University Library. Arrangements are made for part-time students to have access to library facilities near to where they live.

Closing dates for Applications

Full-time research studentships are advertised in the educational press and online in the early part of the year. The closing date for applications is 1 March in any year and the annual registration date is 1 October.

Applications for part-time study may be submitted at any time, but we strongly recommend that applications are submitted by 31 March in any year for students who wish to commence study in that same year. The annual registration date is 1 October, as for full-time study.

Website: www.open.ac.uk/Arts/Literature/research.htm



English Department Staff and their Research Interests

Professor Richard Allen

Literary relations between Britain and India, literature and gender

Dr Linda Anderson (Reader in Creative Writing)

Practice and teaching of Creative Writing; the novel and short stories; the boundaries between fiction and fact; creativity

Dr Sue Asbee (Senior Lecturer)

20th century literature in Ireland and the USA

Dr Richard Danson Brown (Senior Lecturer)

Renaissance literature (particularly Spenser and Shakespeare) and modern poetry (particularly Louis MacNeice and his circle)

Dr Delia da Sousa Correa (Senior Lecturer)

19th century literature, especially connections with music, gender and science; modernism

Dr Fiona J Doloughan (Lecturer)

Contemporary narrative theory and practice

Professor Robert Fraser (Senior Research Fellow)

Literature and anthropology; postcolonial aesthetics; biography; migration theory

Mr Bill Greenwell (Lecturer in Creative Writing)

Practice and teaching of Creative Writing; poetry; life writing including oral history; e-learning

Professor Suman Gupta (Senior Lecturer)

20th century literature, literature and globalisation, discourse theory

Dr Sara Haslam (Senior Lecturer)

19th and 20th century English literature, particularly Ford Madox Ford, Thomas Hardy and modernism; the literature of the First World War

Professor David Johnson

Shakespeare Studies, Post-Colonial Literature and Theory; travel narratives 1600-1850, Literature and Law

Dr Peg Katritzky (Senior Research Fellow)



Early modern literature and culture; English actors in Europe in the early modern period; theatre and medicine

Professor Susheila Nasta
Post-colonial literature, particularly Caribbean and South Asian; twentieth-century and contemporary fiction

Dr Derek Neale (Lecturer)
Practice and teaching of Creative Writing; the novel and short stories; memory and writing; the creative process

Dr Anita Pacheco (Senior Lecturer)
Early modern women's writing, in particular the works of Aphra Behn; Restoration literature and politics and Shakespeare

Dr Lynda Prescott (Senior Lecturer)
19th and 20th century fiction, post-colonial literature

Dr Alex Tickell (Lecturer)
Colonial and postcolonial literature; South Asian fiction in English; travel writing

Dr Shaf Towheed
History of the Book; Reading Experience Database; nineteenth-century literature and culture; Edith Wharton; Vernon Lee

Professor Dennis Walder
Dickens, South African literature, especially Athol Fugard, Director of the Colonial and Post-Colonial Literatures in English Research Group

Professor Nicola Watson
18th century and Romantic literature and culture, women's writing, literature and national identity; literary tourism

There are two Research Groups within the English Department:

The Book History Research Group, and The Postcolonial Literatures Research Group. Details of their interests and activities may be found on the Department website (below). Both Groups welcome applications from suitably qualified candidates. Members of the two Groups have been awarded funding by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to carry out research on a joint project on 'The Colonial



and Post-Colonial History of the Book'. Applications from full-time or part-time candidates for work on a topic within the larger project are especially welcome.

Website: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/english/research.shtml>