

DEFINITIVE COURSE RECORD

Intended Award	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) [various subject specialisms] All students are initially registered as MPhil/PhD and must be confirmed as an MPhil or PhD student by the end of the first year for a full-time student (or equivalent for part-time students).
Awarding Body	University of Essex
Teaching Institution	University of Suffolk
Level of Award ¹	FHEQ Level 8
Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies Recognition	None
Mode of Attendance	Full-time and part-time (and exceptionally, via distance learning)
Standard Length of Course	3 years full-time (standard period) and up to 1 year completion period 6 years part-time (standard period) and up to 2 years completion period
Entry Requirements ²	Bachelors (Honours) degree, graded at 1 or 2:1, awarded by an institution or body with degree awarding powers in the UK or equivalent from a recognised overseas institution Where English is not a first language, IELTS 6.5 with a minimum of 6.5 in each component (or equivalent) Applicants are required to prepare a research proposal and attend an interview Acceptance is subject to available research expertise within the relevant academic school and/or research institute

This definitive record sets out the essential features and characteristics of PhD programmes delivered at the University of Suffolk and validated by the University of Essex. The information provided is accurate for students commencing PhD programmes in the 2026-27 academic year³.

Course Summary

PhD programmes at the University of Suffolk provide students with the opportunity to conduct independent study and produce work demonstrating an original contribution to knowledge in their subject, field or profession, through original research or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding. This will be supported by generic skills training through the Suffolk Doctoral Training Programme and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Programme.

¹ For an explanation of the levels of higher education study, see the [QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(2024\)](#)

² Details of standard entry requirements can be found in the [Admissions Policy](#).

³ The University reserves the right to make changes to course content, structure, delivery and assessment as outlined in the [Admissions Policy](#).

DEFINITIVE COURSE RECORD

Course Aims

Due to the individualised nature of postgraduate research degrees, course aims and outcomes are usually determined during the research proposal stage, and adapted as necessary throughout the research period. Students will be supported through discussions with their supervisory team and during Annual Progress Reviews, using the published progression milestones as a framework for their research journey.

Postgraduate research students are expected to exercise personal responsibility and to demonstrate the ability to work autonomously. Study at this level requires students to think critically about problems in order to produce innovative solutions and create new knowledge.

With support from their supervisory team and the wider Suffolk Doctoral College, students will develop the skills to effectively plan, manage and deliver an independent research project, selecting and justifying appropriate methodological processes while recognising, evaluating and minimising the risks involved. Students will be supported to develop their communication skills, so that they can engage in research with impact and communicate outcomes to diverse academic and non-academic audiences.

PhD programmes also aim to support students to engage in ongoing personal and professional development, through the Suffolk Doctoral Training Programme and the wider Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Programme.

Course Learning Outcomes

In addition to developing specialist knowledge within their discipline, the following statements define the generic knowledge, understanding and skills that students graduating from PhD programmes will have been judged to have demonstrated in order to achieve the award. These statements, known as learning outcomes, have been formally approved as aligned with the generic qualification descriptor for level 8 awards as set out by the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)⁶.

On successful completion of their PhD programme, graduates should be able to demonstrate:

1. The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review.
2. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice.
3. The ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of their discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
4. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
5. The ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in their specialist field, often in the absence of complete data.
6. Working with others to ensure the wider impact of research, communicating their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
7. Knowledge of professional standards in research and research integrity, and the ability to engage in professional practice, including ethical, legal, and health and safety aspects.

DEFINITIVE COURSE RECORD

Course Design

The design of PhD programmes has been guided by the following benchmarks and frameworks:

- [QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(February 2024\)](#)
- [QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement \(February 2020\)](#)
- [Vitae Researcher Development Framework \(2025\)](#)

Awards

On successful completion of the course, students will be awarded a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the relevant subject specialism.

Students who do not meet agreed progression milestones (as determined via Annual Progress Review) or who, following the submission of the thesis and oral examination, do not meet the requirements for the intended award may be eligible for a level 7 exit award of Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

Course Delivery

PhD programmes are delivered at the University of Suffolk, and may also exceptionally be delivered via distance learning. Students are expected to work on a supervised independent research project. Full-time students are expected to undertake on average 36 hours per week of full-time independent study, and part-time students are expected to undertake on average 18 hours per week of independent study.

Students are expected to attend such classes, seminars and meetings as specified by their supervisory team and/or the Suffolk Doctoral College. This includes regular supervisory meetings (monthly for full-time students and every six to eight weeks for part-time students), Annual Progress Review meetings, and training as agreed with their supervisory team as part of their Training Needs Analysis and Personal and Professional Development Plan.

Course Assessment

Students will be assessed via submission of a thesis that embodies the results of their research, and an oral examination (viva) at which they defend their thesis.

Supervisory Team

A student's supervisory team will comprise a lead supervisor, a co-supervisor and, in some cases, an additional co-supervisor, normally from the University of Suffolk. In some instances there may be an approved external supervisor with topic expertise linked to funded PhD research. At least one member of the supervisory team must have experience of successfully supervising at least one research degree student through to completion.

Course Costs

Students undertaking PhD programmes will be charged tuition fees as detailed below.

Student Group	Tuition Fees (standard period)
Full-time Home students	£5,006 per year
Part-time Home students	£2,503 per year
Full-time International (non-lab based)	£14,500 per year
Full-time International (lab-based)	£16,000 per year

In addition, students may be charged tuition fees during their completion (write-up) period. There is no charge for the first year of completion (full-time students) or first two years of

DEFINITIVE COURSE RECORD

completion (part-time students), but there is a £500 per year charge for any subsequent years of completion.

Payment of tuition fees is due at the time of enrolment and is managed in accordance with the Tuition Fee Policy.

Depending on their subject specialism, students may incur additional costs for equipment, materials, field trips, conference attendance and/or exhibitions. Each academic school has postgraduate research development funding which may be able to cover costs associated with developmental opportunities such as conference attendance, networking events and residential. All students are entitled to apply for development funding whilst doing their PhD, but available funds may be limited and each application will be considered on its merits.

Academic Framework and Regulations

PhD programmes are delivered in accordance with the Framework and Regulations for Research Degree Awards and other academic policies and procedures of the University of Suffolk, as approved by the University of Essex and published on the University of Suffolk [website](#).