

FindaPhD.com help us answer some common questions relating to PhD...

1. Don't you have to be a genius to do a PhD?

One of the most misleading myths about PhD study is that it requires exceptional intelligence and that only a small number of remarkable people can achieve a doctorate.

This isn't true. A PhD isn't an intelligence test. It's a research project.

A doctorate won't turn you into a genius (or confirm that you already are one). It will make you an expert in a very specific topic in a very specific field. You just have to have the dedication, skills and subject knowledge to see through an original research project at an advanced level.

2. I thought a PhD was only for people who want to be an academic?

It's true that a PhD is usually the required entry qualification for a career in academic teaching and research, but that doesn't mean that a PhD is *only* useful for a career in academia – or that everyone with a PhD goes on to do an academic job.

On the one hand, this is part of the reality of the job market in higher education: there are only a limited number of academic posts available and competition for them is high.

On the other hand, the modern doctorate is becoming a much more versatile qualification, supported by new initiatives focussing on employability and transferrable skills.

Today's PhD graduates aren't just experts in medieval lyric poetry, protein folding or economic theory: they also have three years' experience of project management, public speaking, and professional networking

3. My PhD should lead to a brilliant, world-changing, discovery

What makes a PhD a PhD? The answer is simple enough: your thesis will need to offer a 'significant original contribution to knowledge'.

That's the classic criteria for a PhD thesis to pass examination, but what does it actually mean? Do you need to invent a new form of space travel? Discover that King Alfred the Great was actually a woman? Prove that everything anyone has ever written about Shakespeare's plays is wrong? No.

Research is rarely that dramatic – at PhD level or otherwise. Your thesis just has to be original (no one has arrived at the same results before) and academically significant (your data and conclusions should be useful to other scholars in your field).

You can change the world later.

4. Isn't PhD study lonely and unrewarding?

Three to four years of full time research is a tough challenge. And a PhD is hard. Like any long term project, you'll probably have moments when you get a bit fed up.

That said, it's just as normal to have incredible breakthroughs in the library or laboratory or to take pride in the many highly rewarding personal achievements and milestones that occur within a doctorate – from successful presentations and publications to other forms of recognition.

And it's normal to share and celebrate those with your supervisors, or with other students at your university or within wider scholarly networks. Those other people will be a big part of your PhD experience and, like you, they know how awesome and impressive it is to be making that significant original contribution to knowledge.

There is no doubt that a PhD is hard, but it doesn't have to be lonely and it's about as far removed from unrewarding as you could possibly imagine.

5. How much does it cost to do a PhD?

The likelihood is, if you are a UK or EU student (subject to Brexit!) then a PhD won't cost as much as you think. The fees for a full time PhD in the 2019/20 academic year (the year of writing) are £4,327 and these are halved each year if you study part time. These increase slightly year on year and the fees are payable for each year of study.

If you have studied previously at the University of Suffolk then you will be eligible for the Alumni Postgraduate Loyalty Scheme which means the fees will be reduced by up to 20% each year.

The Postgraduate Doctoral Loan is also a possible method of funding and can help with fees and living costs while you study a PhD. Take a look at www.gov.uk/doctoral-loan for more information on this.

6. Sounds great, but I'm too old to start a PhD.

The majority of current PhD students at the University of Suffolk are classed as mature students, so you wouldn't be alone! Our PhD cohort currently ranges from 25 to 74, age is but a number!

If you have any questions or concerns that haven't been answered then please get in touch with the Graduate School Coordinator on graduateschool@uos.ac.uk.