

DOCTORATE IN DESIGN (DDES)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE?

A **Professional Doctorate** is an advanced academic qualification designed for experienced professionals who want to deepen their knowledge and enhance their impact within their field. It is well-suited for those working in the **creative industries or education, including art, design, and related fields**. These programmes support individuals committed to professional excellence and ongoing development. A defining feature of the Professional Doctorate is its potential focus on the candidate's workplace as the basis for research. Whether you work in a university, industry, or design practice, your professional environment becomes the setting for **identifying practical challenges and conducting original research that leads to meaningful outcomes**. The study contributes to both your practice and the broader professional context.

Professional Doctorates are usually studied part-time, allowing you to continue working while completing structured, practice-based research within a supportive academic framework. This flexible format enables you to make a valuable contribution to your field while progressing your career. On successful completion of the programme, you will be awarded the title Doctor.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DOING A DOCTORATE?

Our primary audience includes practising artists and designers, art and design educators, and professionals who face barriers to academic progression due to limited research experience. Many professionals also value research training to better understand their work and developments in their field. Key benefits include **gaining skills to conduct research relevant to your profession and being equipped to lead innovation through advanced practice**.

HOW DOES A PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE DIFFER FROM A PHD?

A Professional Doctorate in Design combines structured study with reflective practice and theoretical analysis, often through live projects. Many candidates study part-time while continuing their professional work. Unlike traditional PhDs, which typically require frequent campus attendance, **Professional Doctorates offer the flexibility of remote supervision**, with only a few required campus visits throughout the entire program. This allows candidates to **stay engaged in their professional settings throughout their research**.

CAN I INCLUDE MY PRACTICE?

Yes. Your professional practice is a core component of the doctorate and will be included in your final submission along with a written thesis.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PRACTICE IN THE THESIS?

Practice can be employed during the research process as a method of investigation or used at the end to present and support your ideas. This practice may take the form of artworks, designed artefacts, or digital media, depending on your research focus.

HOW IS QUALITY MAINTAINED?

The University of Hertfordshire has designed its Professional Doctorates to meet the standards set by the Economic and Social Research Council Postgraduate Training Guidelines. Graduates receive **thorough training in research methods and alternative theoretical approaches**, enabling them to link theory to practice effectively. These measures ensure that the degree is at a doctoral level and is recognised internationally.

WILL I RECEIVE THE TITLE “DR”?

Yes. Upon successful completion, you will earn a doctoral qualification and can use the title “**Dr**” along with the post-nominal letters **Doctor of Design**.

HOW LONG DOES THE COURSE TAKE?

The Professional Doctorate typically takes **three years for full-time study or five to six years part-time, which is equivalent to a traditional PhD**. The maximum duration is four years for full-time and eight years for part-time study. Around half of current candidates study part-time due to ongoing professional commitments.

CAN I FINISH EARLIER THAN SCHEDULED?

Possibly. Since many candidates work on research projects aligned with their professional roles, they may progress more quickly. With strong output and quality, an early completion may be approved. **The minimum allowed is 12 months for full-time study or 24 months for part-time study, but realistically, most part-time candidates require at least 36 months.**

WHAT IS THE COURSE STRUCTURE?

There are three key assessment points.

The First Progress Assessment is within 12 months of enrolment for both full-time and part-time students. The Second Progress Assessment is completed within 24 months for full-time students and 48 months for part-time students. The final viva typically occurs by month 48 for full-time students and month 96 for part-time students, usually at the end of the third year for full-time students or the fifth to sixth year for part-time students.

In the first two years of part-time study, candidates complete a structured research training programme, including 20 online lectures or podcasts, selected readings, and 15 assignments. This phase results in a detailed research proposal. Following approval, candidates proceed to the primary research phase, supported by their supervisors. The final assessment is based on a written thesis and related practical work evaluated for its contribution to the candidate’s profession.

HOW WILL I BE SUPERVISED?

Each candidate has **two or sometimes three supervisors**. Supervision is delivered in person or online, depending on your enrolment type and location. Supervisors provide consistent guidance to help you complete your doctorate efficiently, especially considering the professional demands of most candidates.

CAN I COMPLETE THE PROGRAMME FROM MY HOME COUNTRY?

Yes. The course **can be completed entirely online** using the university's virtual learning environment. You will also be able to share ideas with fellow researchers and participate in discussion logs and forums.

HOW OFTEN DO I NEED TO VISIT THE UNIVERSITY?

You are required to **attend a series of in-person events at the University of Hertfordshire** during your course, each lasting about one week. **These occur once per year**, and you will receive advance notice of the dates. You are also welcome to attend additional research events, groups, and seminars on campus.

CAN I STUDY FULL-TIME?

Yes. **A full-time option is available** for candidates who can maintain a strong connection between their research and the professional world.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR ENROLLMENT?

The minimum requirement is an undergraduate degree. Most applicants also hold a postgraduate qualification or have significant professional experience. If English is not your native language, you will need to demonstrate proficiency equivalent to an **IELTS score of 6.5 or higher**.

WHEN DOES THE COURSE START?

The course begins in October each year. There is also a February intake for students who prefer to align with the international academic calendar.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Fees are updated each year. The latest figures are available online at:
www.herts.ac.uk/apply/fees-and-funding/research-degrees

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For further details or to discuss your application, contact:

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