

Professional Doctorates in the Creative Arts

DDes | DFA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What is a Professional Doctorate?

Professional Doctorates are an expanding area of doctoral study that focus on using the candidate's workplace as the context in which research questions will be identified and resolved. The workplace may be your employment, for example as a lecturer in a university or school of art and design, or it may be your studio or design practice. During the doctorate you will be able to study issues that arise in this professional context and offer solutions that are relevant to your professional colleagues and the international community. Professional Doctorates "aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge." (UK Economic and Social Research Council).

What are the benefits of doing a doctorate?

Our main target market consists of practicing artists and designers, art and design educators, and those with professional experience but encounter barriers to academic promotion and opportunities owing to a lack of research training. We also anticipate that many professionals will value the training in research in order to gain a deeper understanding of their work and the state of research and development in their own fields. The main benefits of having a doctorate are therefore (1) that the candidate will understand how to undertake professionally relevant research in their field; and (2) that they will be able to take the lead in advancing their field through well-grounded advanced practice.

What are some differences between a Professional Doctorate and PhD?

Professional doctorates in the School of Creative Arts offer a structured programme of study, which aims to produce enhanced practice through a mixture of theoretical analysis, and critical and reflective practice undertaken on "live projects". As a result, candidates often study part-time while continuing their professional practice alongside their studies. While a PhD (full-time or part-time) normally requires regular attendance on campus, candidates studying a professional doctorate have the option of visiting campus once a year (or, 5 times within their period of study), with the remainder of their research supervision conducted remotely. This enables candidates to undertake their research while embedded in their professional environment.

While a PhD may be purely theoretical or practice-led, the Professional doctorate tends to emphasize research through practice, with practice-led or practice-based research. Candidates specify a field of practice, which is recognized in the title of their award as DDEs (Doctor of Design) or DFA (Doctor of Fine Art).

Can I include my own practice?

Yes, it is integral to the concept of the Professional Doctorate that it incorporates the professional practice of the candidate. This is reflected in the final submission that includes both written and practice elements.

What is the role of practice alongside the written thesis?

Students may create practice as part of their research process, as a method of discovery, or towards the end of their research as a way of communicating and illustrating their ideas. This practice can take many forms, such as artworks for exhibition, or designed artefacts (real or virtual).

What subjects may be studied by DDes or DFA researchers?

These programmes broadly cover all fields of art and design, including the intersection of art and media (such as in film), with a focus on visual arts and culture. Some common fields of study for DDes students include: architecture, urban design, computational design, UX-design, graphic design and typography, digital design, interaction design, 3D printing/additive manufacture, product design, interior design and fashion. Some common fields of study for DFA students include: painting, photography, film and video art, sculpture, applied arts and digital media arts.

How is quality assured?

To ensure that these Professional Doctorates are recognised internationally, the University of Hertfordshire has designed them using the quality standard published by the Economic and Social Research Council *Postgraduate Training Guidelines* 2005. As a result, graduates will have a grounding in research methods including alternative epistemological positions that provide a bridge between theory and practice, and will understand how research contributes to the development of their practice in a professional context. These, and other measures, ensure that the course is of doctoral standing.

Will I achieve the title “Dr”?

Yes, on completion of the course you will receive an internationally recognised doctoral qualification and gain the title “Dr” and the post-nominal letters “DFA” or “DDes”.

How long does the course take?

Owing to its equivalence to the PhD, the Professional Doctorate normally takes the same time as a traditional doctorate, i.e. 3 years full-time or 5-6 years part-time. The maximum period allowed is 4 years full-time or 8 years part-time. Around half of the current students study part-time owing to the role of professional employment as part of the course.

Can I complete the course more quickly than scheduled?

Because Professional Doctorate candidates are often working on projects related to their professional work or employment, there is less difference between employment and study and they can often be more productive than other part-time candidates. Subject to satisfactory quality and productivity a shorter study time can be negotiated. The minimum period allowed is 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time. Realistically, it is unlikely that a candidate could complete what is required in less than 36 months part-time.

What is the course structure?

There are three main assessment points during the course of study: the Registration Assessment (within 12 months from the date of enrolment for both full-time FT and part-time PT routes), the Doctoral Review Assessment (within 24 months from the date of enrolment for FT and 48 for PT), and the final VIVA (within 48 months from the date of enrolment for FT and 96 for PT, but normally expected around the end of the 3rd year of research for FT and 5th/6th for PT).

A part-time candidate will spend Years 1 and 2 undertaking a structured programme of research training, which consists of 20 online lecture/podcasts, selected reading and 15 small assignments directly related to their research. At the end of this phase the

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candidate will have a detailed research proposal on a topic relevant to their profession. Subject to satisfactory assessment they would then progress to the next phase, which consists of researching a topic that has been designed with the supervisors. The final assessment of the Professional Doctorate is based on the submission of a written thesis and accompanying artefacts, etc. and the evaluation of this as a contribution to the candidate's professional field.

How much of the course is taught?

As a part of course training, there are a number of Study Packs that are designed to support candidates through their research by aiding their understanding of the nature of a doctorate and its requirements. Each of these packs contains a range of resources, including short video lectures, notes, recommended reading, and links to other useful resources. Some also contain activities that are designed to prompt further consideration of how the contents of the study pack relates to the own research project. The Study Packs are aligned with the three assessment points, helping candidates to be ready for each assessment/submission. All material can be accessed through Canvas/StudyNet: our virtual learning environment.

How will I be supervised?

Each candidate has 2 supervisors (in some cases 3), and supervision is delivered in person or online via Skype, etc., according to the nature of the candidate's enrolment, i.e. full-time, part-time or overseas-based. Because our target audience for the doctorate consists of busy professionals who need the qualification and experience for their career development, the supervisors will work closely with candidates and maintain a strong direction on the project, ensuring that you will complete your doctorate in the shortest time possible.

Can I undertake the programme in my home country, i.e. online?

Yes, the whole course can be completed using the online virtual study environment, benefitting from logs and other forms of sharing ideas with fellow candidates. You will be required to attend certain events annually at the University of Hertfordshire, including research training and student symposia.

How often must I visit the University of Hertfordshire?

There are 5 events that you must attend at the University in order to compete the course. These occur approximately once per year and will require you to attend for about one week each time. We will give you plenty of notice about the exact dates of these events. This represents the minimum requirement but you are of course welcome to visit UH more times and take part in the many research activities that we offer. If you wish to attend more frequently, you may attend research groups, seminars and tutorials on campus.

Can I undertake the course full-time?

Yes, there is a full-time route available but candidates must show that they are able to sustain the necessary connection between their studies and the professional world outside the university.

What qualifications do I need?

The minimum entry requirement is an undergraduate degree but most commonly prospective candidates also have a postgraduate degree or extensive professional experience as well. If English is not your native language you will need certification that your proficiency is equivalent to IELTS 6.5 or higher.

When does the course start?

The course starts in September each year, as this is the start of the UK academic year. We also have a January intake for students who wish to align their studies with the

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international academic year.

How much does it cost?

Course fees are updated annually. The latest fees are published online here:
<http://www.herts.ac.uk/apply/fees-and-funding/research-degrees>

Is there funding available?

The University does not offer funding for this course. However, you may have access to funding from your national Research Council.

Whom should I contact if I have any queries or want to apply?

If you have any further queries please feel free to email the Programme Director, Dr Silvio Carta (s.cart@herts.ac.uk). Silvio will advise you on the development of a proposal and guide you through the research process.