

RESEARCH DEGREE PROPOSAL & APPLICATION GUIDANCE NOTES 2026-27

DEADLINE: 30 January 2026, 17:00 (GMT)

Applications received after this date will not be considered for September 2026 entry.

If you have any questions regarding an application, please contact the Postgraduate Research team on pgr@falmouth.ac.uk

Guidelines for completing the online Research Degree Application Form

These guidance notes will take you through the online Research Degree Application Form section by section, providing more information about what you need to include. Please ensure you read these guidance notes carefully when you are completing the online application form.

1. Personal details

Please complete this section as fully as possible.

i) A bit more about you

Please complete this section regarding your nationality and residence status as fully as possible. This section is very important for assessing your tuition fee status and will be used to assess your eligibility for any studentship that you intend to apply for. If you have not been ordinarily resident in the UK or EEA/EU for the three years preceding 1 September 2026, you would normally be liable for the University's overseas tuition fee rate.

2. Contact Details

Please provide your permanent residential address. If you have another address that you would prefer to be contacted on, please add that in the 'Contact Address' section. If you are due to relocate to the area, you can update your address later, so use your current residence.

3. Other Details

Please complete this section as fully as possible. The question marks at the end of the boxes offer additional help text to assist you with your answers if you are unsure about the question.

i) Marketing Data

It is useful for us to know how you found out about the course, or studentship, here at Falmouth. Please select the most relevant category using the drop-down menu.

4. Qualifications

A master's degree in an appropriate subject is considered to be a particularly valuable preparation for a research degree, although the normal minimum entry requirement for a research degree is an upper second-class honours degree of a British university or recognised institution of higher education. Please make sure that you outline clearly your previous and current academic qualifications and upload copies of certificates or transcripts wherever possible. If you do not know the result of a course you are currently taking, you can indicate when you expect to know and what result you are expecting.

If your course was undertaken overseas, then please state clearly the name of the course (in the original language) and provide as much information as possible about the institution (including the country where the qualification was undertaken). Wherever possible Falmouth University

will endeavour to compare your overseas qualification in relation to the UK academic requirements to study a higher degree however there may be instances where we will require your qualifications and transcripts to be formally translated.

i) English Language Qualifications

If English is your first language you only need to select 'Yes' from the drop-down menu here. If English isn't your first language you will be asked a further two questions, first relating to previous study, and secondly regarding an English language test.

If English is not your first language, you will normally need to demonstrate that you are suitably proficient in English before we can enrol you on the Research Degrees Programme. You can do this by providing evidence of one of the following:

- A recent Falmouth-approved English Language Test (ELT) score which meets the University's requirements for the Research Degrees Programme: either an IELTS minimum overall test result score of 7.0 with a 7.0 in writing and with no other component score lower than 6.0; or an equivalent test score;
- Recent completion of an MA (Distinction only) level course of study in a majority English-speaking country.

By 'recent' we mean that your English Language Test score or MA level qualification needs to have been awarded no more than two years prior to the date that you would first enrol at Falmouth. We cannot normally accept evidence that is older than this. You may submit an application for a place on the Research Degrees Programme before you have obtained your IELTS or equivalent test score, or before you have received your MA certificate, but if you are offered a place then you would need to provide evidence of having satisfied this condition before we can enrol you.

Each applicant is assessed on an individual basis and if you are offered a place on the Research Degrees Programme, then depending on your level of English language proficiency as demonstrated through your application form and interview, we will let you know whether we would require a new IELTS result before you can begin your PhD studies. Please note that we cannot accept TOEFL test results for this purpose.

If English is not your first language, please indicate on your application form if you have not yet fulfilled the English language proficiency requirements as stated above; if you are offered a place on the Research Degrees Programme then you will need to provide evidence of having done so before you can enrol.

Requirements for distance learning overseas online applicants:

In addition to meeting the standard academic and language eligibility requirements, applicants to the distance learning overseas online mode need to demonstrate that they:

- can successfully conduct their research with the resources available to them at their distance learning place of study;
- have access to appropriate IT facilities, so that they can engage in supervision and training from their distance learning place of study;
- have the necessary time, commitment, and appropriate attitude toward distance learning online study.

Students on this mode do not hold a Student Visa so cannot enter the UK for the purpose of

study or access Falmouth University's physical resources or buildings. Distance Learning Students have access to online resources available to all PGR students.

5. Experience (and Employment)

Please provide details of your relevant employment history, listing the most recent ones first. The University will consider all relevant information provided here when assessing applications, but it is particularly important to provide as much information here as possible if you do not meet the minimum academic qualifications as outlined above. If you are currently employed by Falmouth University in any capacity, please provide details in this section.

Please also provide details here of any other relevant experience which you have not already included in your application. If you do not meet the minimum academic qualification requirements outlined above, then the University will also take into account any other relevant experience that you have when assessing your application. You may provide here details of any publications, exhibitions, teaching, research or other professional experience that you consider to be directly relevant to your application.

You will also be invited to upload your full CV, please do so.

6. Research Proposal

i) Are you currently employed by Falmouth University?

Please use the drop-down menu to answer this question. If you are employed by Falmouth University in any capacity, please answer 'yes'.

ii) Proposed supervisor

If you have a proposed supervisor in mind or have already discussed your proposal with someone who could be a potential supervisor, please include their name here. This section is not compulsory if a proposed supervisor has not been identified and can be left blank. If you are applying to a specific project outline advertised by Falmouth there will be a proposed supervisor indicated in the project outline information, and you can use their name here.

iii) Proposed project title / Studentship title

Please include your proposed research project title in this section of the form. If you are applying to a specific doctoral project brief advertised by the University, which has a title included, please include that title here.

iv) Do you have a research proposal to upload?

The research proposal should either be uploaded here on the **Research Proposal** tab of the online application form as a Word or PDF document or typed directly in to the online form (by selecting 'No' to the above question 'Do you have a research proposal to upload' a text box will appear for you to copy and paste your proposal into). **YOU MUST INCLUDE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR YOUR APPLICATION TO BE CONSIDERED.**

v) Research Proposal Structure (please follow the structure detailed below):

The schematic outline below is a guide to the headings you need to address in your proposal. Some, like the section on theoretical context, may be open to a very wide range of approaches and interpretations and may not – especially in a mainly theoretical based proposal – be really distinguished from the historical or contemporary context. Others, like the survey of the contemporary context, are essential to all submissions.

Your research proposal should be **no more than 1000 words maximum** (not including your bibliography). **Anything in excess of 1000 words will not be taken into consideration by the reviewing committee.**

Doctoral Project Brief alignment (not included in your 1000 word limit): at the start of your proposal please indicate if you are responding to a Doctoral Project brief, and if so, which one. Please include the title of the brief as it is listed on the [Doctoral Project briefs](#) page of the Falmouth website.

Research Centre alignment (not included in your 1000 word limit): Research & Knowledge Exchange at Falmouth is organised in four strategic [Research Centres](#), namely: Centre for Blended Realities, Centre for Heritage, Culture & Society, Centre for Arts & Health, and the Centre for Pedagogy Futures. The Research Centres operate across the University's academic departments, providing a focus for excellent research in identified areas of strength. They support groups of researchers in a range of activities that extend beyond the remit of individual projects, creating an environment where debate can flourish, providing a sound foundation for future work. **If your proposal aligns to a research centre**, please indicate which one at the beginning of your proposal.

- **Title:** This should express the main area of investigation, implying its questions and potential argument or standpoint. While being a working title, which will inevitably change over time, it is important that you are as specific and precise as possible. The title should be brief and reflect the main question of the project. You should avoid over-long or technical words and phrases such as 'an investigation into...'.
- **Subject Area, Aims and Objectives:** Define briefly your subject and the main concerns of the investigation, including a set of aims and objectives that will guide your research. If your proposal is primarily practice based, you should also use this section to describe your vision of your practice and the way in which you work in your practice on your preoccupations and concerns. It is worth thinking hard about this section, as it will form the basis of your study for the next few years (though it will inevitably evolve as you make progress). After defining your subject, you might find it helpful to think about the main concerns of the project as questions you are asking yourself, to which you hope to find the answer. The aims and objectives are important because they, in a sense, declare the criteria for your investigation, against which the success or failure of your project can be assessed. If you find it difficult to articulate your aims and objectives, you might find it helpful to think of your aim as the most significant questions or problems you hope to tackle. Your objectives are the steps by which you will meet this aim. Your proposal should normally have one or two aims, followed by a series of around six objectives. The idea is that by the time you have met all your objectives, you should have achieved your aim.
- **Historical Context:** There is no single history that suits all investigations, but you should identify the various strands of history that relate to your particular research. It may be a history of ideas and concepts that have influenced the development of a particular area of art and design, the history of the medium or technology in which you work, or a particular part of the history of Art or Design.
- **Contemporary Context:** As far as you are able, define the contemporary work that relates to your field of investigation.

You must do this for the following reasons:

- i. to demonstrate that you are aware of the field in which you are working.
- ii. to demonstrate that your proposed research will have distinct feature which will make it potentially original.
- iii. to form the basis of links with other research work to which you will contribute or on which you will build.

- **Theoretical Context:** There is a great choice of options in this area; none of them exclusive. An element of theoretical context is important for every kind of project, though the degree of theoretical content will vary, particularly for practice-based work. You should be able to demonstrate the ways in which you evaluate your own work and that of others, and the sources you use to inform your evaluation. A theoretical context will help you avoid simply asserting a position and support you in the reflective approach that is needed for a research degree. Three different kinds of theoretical context are outlined below (but these are not exhaustive, and you may prefer a different model). They are defined with a bias towards a practice-based proposal. If your proposal is entirely theoretical and critical, only the first and possibly the second might apply:

Critical Theory – definition of the critical concepts and terms you will use in order to evaluate or critique your experimental work.

Parallel Theory – definition of theoretical fields which may share concepts with your experimental work but there is no simple, direct relationship. This acknowledges that practice and theory are seen as distinct discourses.

Projective or Generative Theory – theory that is used to define intention and guide the experimental work you will do.

- **Methodology:** Your research method and approach will need to be defined in all cases but in practice-based areas of study, methodologies are less well established, so you may like to think about the following:
 - try to describe the basic methods and procedures you will adopt in discovering and recording research information.
 - if it is a practice-based proposal, how does the theory relate to the practical experimentation?
 - what is the theory for?
 - what process of experimentation will you use?
 - how will you record what you do and keep track of what you have done?
- **Ethical Dimensions of the Research:** If there are ethical considerations that need to be taken into account then you should address them briefly now. There is a comprehensive ethical approval process which is intended to safeguard researchers, participants and others on whom the proposed research might impact, directly or indirectly. If you are offered a place at Falmouth, then you will address any ethical issues formally when you apply to register your research proposal in your first year. In broad terms, the University expects all research to respect participants' rights; commercial, intellectual and civil, dignity (including privacy and confidentiality), safety and wellbeing.

- **Work Plan:** Make a prediction of the major stages of the work (probably not more than five) and the minor subdivisions (if appropriate). Take care if aspects of the research will run concurrently.
- **Prediction of the Form of the Final Presentation:** Think about the form of the final presentation, for example:
 - will it be a bound book with a CD-ROM or Internet element?
 - will it be a book with video tapes?
 - will it be an exhibition, a catalogue and a written thesis?
 - will it be a bound book with images?
 - will this be a wholly written thesis?

The following sections are not included in the 1000-word count:

- **Indicative bibliography**
List the main reference works which you will use for your research (no more than one page of A4). These may be films, paintings, TV programmes, curated collections or websites as well as books or journal articles. Citations must be consistent and adopt a recognised standard system, for example, Harvard (with or without footnotes) or Numeric.

vi) **Supporting Documents**

If you have visual evidence that is applicable to your research and application, you can upload that information in the **Supporting Documents** section of the **Research Proposal** tab. You may also provide a URL for audio or video pieces (5 minutes maximum).

7. **Passport and Visa**

Please fill out your passport details here. If you are unable to provide them, you will have another opportunity after you have submitted your application.

You will also be asked in this section whether you require a visa to study in the UK. Please provide details as requested.

8. **Fees and Funding / A bit more information**

- Source of Funding:** Please indicate in this section of the form how you plan to fund your research degree studies. You can find out more about how to fund your studies on the [Fund your Research Degree page](#). The section of the online form also gives you the opportunity to add more than one source of funding if this is applicable to you.

Doctoral Loans

Doctoral Loans were introduced in 2018, to check whether you would be eligible to apply for a Doctoral Loan please visit their webpages: <https://www.gov.uk/doctoral-loan> If you do plan to apply for a doctoral loan for your research degree studies please indicate 'UK, ChI, IoM or EU student finance services' as your source of funding from the drop down menu.

- A bit more information**

For non-UK nationals, you will be asked some additional residency information here in this section. This helps us identify your tuition fee status. Please complete this as fully as

possible.

9. Submission

Here you are asked to confirm your submission via a declaration. **YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CHANGE YOUR APPLICATION ONCE YOU HAVE SUBMITTED IT.**

What communications should I look out for following my application submission?

Submission confirmation email: once you have submitted your online application you will receive an email confirming your application submission and providing you with your applicant number.

Welcome & Applicant Portal login details: one working day following your application submission you will receive a welcome email containing your [Applicant Portal](#) login details. You will then be able to login to the Applicant Portal to view your Portal Messages relating to your Academic References – more information on references is included in the next section.

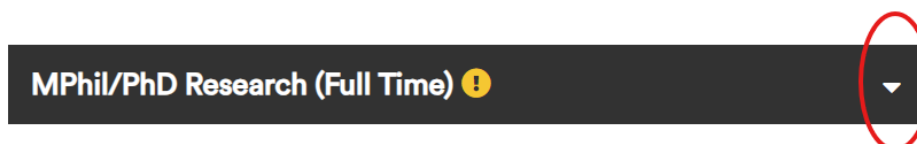
10. After submission of your online application form

i) Providing your Academic References

Following submission of your application, you will receive an email containing your Applicant Portal login details, as described in the previous section. You will need to login to your applicant portal where you will find two outstanding actions for you to complete, listed in the **Documents** section. One of those actions is regarding providing your two Academic References and will be labelled *Referee details for Research*.

Please note: the Documents section will appear in your portal when you expand the black banner with your course name and a white arrow at the end, as show in the screenshot below:

My Applications



You will need to send your two nominated referees the separate *Academic Reference for a Research Degree at Falmouth* form (downloadable from the link in your Documents section of your Applicant Portal), with a copy of your research proposal, and ask them to return their completed referee form to pgr@falmouth.ac.uk. These **MUST** be sent to us direct from the referee and not from yourself. Please also be aware that the downloadable forms will be available **one working day** after you have submitted your online form.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the references are provided to us by 17:00 (GMT) on 6 February 2026 at the latest, one week following the application deadline, otherwise we will be unable to process your application further.

Your two referees are asked to use their professional judgement to comment on the following points (this should not be a general character reference):

- your academic work undertaken, and or past professional experience;
- your previous performance and achievements in relation to your research degree;

proposal (a copy of which you should send to them when sending them the reference form);

- your preparedness for doctoral study;

iii) Next steps

Following submission of your application, and references, the next step in the process is the shortlisting review, where each application is reviewed by subject specialists, and then taken to the Research Degrees Committee for final shortlisting. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted by 30 March 2026, and interviews will take place the week commencing 20 April 2026.