

How to apply for a PhD in Linguistics and Languages

Guidance notes for enquirers

The Linguistics and Languages teaching team at Kingston University welcomes applications from research students in any field that falls within the English language and linguistics remit. New research students can enrol at two points in the year: late September and late January.

Admission criteria

Applicants should have obtained a good result (merit or distinction, or the equivalent) in an MA programme, with a completed dissertation or research project in English language or linguistics. Consideration may be given to applicants with other kinds of qualifications on an individual basis. International students are also required to have the IELTS 7 in English language as evidence of their proficiency in the language. Applicants may also be required to submit a sample of their written work (MA Dissertation, for example) and be interviewed (either face to face or via the telephone) as part of the assessment.

Application process

Potential applicants should first see which member of staff they would like to consider as their Director of Studies:

<http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/downloads/ELC-Team-Research-Areas-Plans-Outputs-Oct-2014.pdf>

You can then contact Dr Paul Booth (P.Booth@Kingston.ac.uk) for any further information.

Further information

If we consider that your project is viable and we have the specialist knowledge to supervise it, then you will be asked to submit a formal application which enables us to check your qualifications, take up references, and possibly invite you to an interview. You can obtain further information from our website:

<http://www.kingston.ac.uk/research/research-interests-and-expertise/>

You should then send a copy of your research proposal and CV to:

Research Administrator,
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
Kingston University,
Penrhyn Road,
Kingston upon Thames,
Surrey KT1 2EE
fassresearch-info@kingston.ac.uk

Guidance notes

The following guidelines are intended to help you submit a proposal to study for a PhD in English language and linguistics at Kingston University. We appreciate that drawing up a proposal is not easy at this stage. What we are looking for is evidence that you have reflected on this topic, have knowledge of the relevant literature and considered the approach that you will be taking, for example, whether you will be collecting some form of empirical data, analysing texts, or a combination of these methods. This means that your proposal needs to be well-written, with a coherent plan based on knowledge of the area, and this requires careful preparation.

The proposal will obviously be a preliminary statement of the research and will almost certainly undergo subsequent modification. Its purpose is to enable us to decide whether we have the specialist expertise to supervise the topic, to evaluate its academic viability and importance and to assess your commitment and enthusiasm. If you are invited to an interview, the proposal will form the basis of our discussion. It is important, therefore to take the time to prepare it as thoroughly as possible. There are a number of useful guides to doctoral research and thesis writing which you may wish to consult before writing your proposal. These include:

- Bentley, P.J. (2006) *The Phd Application Handbook*. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.
- Cryer, P. (2000) *The Research Student's Guide to Success*. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.
- Dunleavy, P. (2003) *Authoring a PhD: How to Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Thesis or Dissertation*. Basingstoke, Hamps: Palgrave Macmillan
- Murray, R. (2000) *How to Write a Thesis*. : Open Univ. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.
- Phillips, E. M. and Pugh, D. S (2000) *How to get a PhD: A Handbook for Students and Their Supervisors*. Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press
- Punch, K. F. (2006) *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. London: Sage.

Structure and Content

Your proposal should be word-processed, double-spaced and four-five sides of A4 paper in length. It should comprise the following elements:

- Title of your research project
- Introduction, describing the topic you intend to investigate
- State the research questions or hypothesis that the research will investigate? Why is it important that these questions/problems be investigated?
- Justification of your choice of topic in terms of its importance: how will the proposed research address the research questions/problems? How will the proposed research make an original contribution to the relevant field(s)?
- Relationship of your work to existing literature
- Methodology, i.e your approach and any theoretical perspective you are considering adopting
- References to works cited and other relevant literature you have consulted (using the Harvard system of referencing).

In addition:

- Give an indicative plan for the proposed research, for example, a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of the proposed plan of study. (This is likely to change and is not prescriptive.) This plan should take into account the timeframe within which the research degree should be completed (three or four years' of full-time study, or six years part-time).
- Briefly explain how your previous study, or your academic or professional background has prepared you to undertake the proposed research.

The choice of topic is obviously very important. English language and linguistics covers a wide range of subject matter and approaches. Whatever area you choose, try and be as specific as possible and avoid the temptation to be over-ambitious.

It is important that the rationale for the research should demonstrate originality with regard to existing work in the field. This means that the proposal should engage in a critical analysis of the relevant literature i.e. what does this study aim to achieve? Does it investigate an area that has either not been examined before, or else only partially so? Is it challenging existing interpretations of the topic, or demonstrating that a different theoretical perspective can lead to new insights? The methodology will vary according to the nature of the project. Say whether you are using informants, questionnaires and interviews, or undertaking some kind of text analysis or both, for example, so a clear description of the qualitative and/or quantitative approaches are clearly given.

References should show a sound bibliographical knowledge of the topic, and be presented alphabetically by the authors' surname using the Harvard referencing system.

A PhD thesis is an original piece of research intended to add to the existing body of knowledge in the field. At this early stage you will only be able to suggest ways in which your work will achieve this, but your proposal should convey your enthusiasm for the topic and confidence in your ability to complete it.