

Centre for Research Through Design

Research is primarily an act of imagination. The Center of Research Through Design encourages deviation from both tightly defined fields and siloing knowledge to foster first times for research arguments and practice implications. Future researchers are urged on to design design methods, to translate tendencies and trends and to challenge their fields and themselves.

The research culture of the Center of Research Through Design is very much built on the idea of thinking through making, focusing on practice-led research in fields such as design innovation, critical design, communication design, design curation, fashion futures, interior design futures, materials futures, socially responsive and inclusive design, and design for sustainability. The Centre welcomes applications from reflective designers who wish to pursue research through an interaction of two interrelated elements: creative practice and writing; and offers a platform to speculate what design might be in the future, how it might be produced, how it might be used.

More specifically, Research through Design is developed through three distinct specialist areas:

Designed Environments (DE) addresses design issues pertaining to everyday interfaces with materials, products, spaces and buildings with sustainable practices as a core concern.

Design for Body & Material (DfBM) is an embryonic research and enterprise grouping with research underpinned by fashion theory and an innovation-driven MA Fashion programme.

Design for Communication & Image (DfCI) at PG and research level supports teaching and research in graphics, illustration and moving image design, underpinned by digital media technology and communication across design areas.

Current students:

Bo Ban, Ruth Carney, Jack Champ, Mireille Fauchon, Leah Fusco, Sarah Johnson, Ninela Ivanova, Mylene Peterman, Hannh Rollings, Purva Tavri

Past students: Emily King, Nicola White, Emma Powell, Charlotte Coetzee, Lucia Lu, Mark Ballance, Jooyoung Sohn, Miles Park, Rosie Hornbuckle, Nik Kris Karamundin, James Self, Regina Peldzus, Maiko Tsutsumi, Pablo Helguera, Riada Shakiry, Kamira Anderson, Dina Belluigi, Kevin Dowd, Lina Khashoggi, Gareth Williams

Preparing a proposal for a research degree (PhD, MPhil, Masters by Research) in Design

Research proposal

The most important element of your application for a research degree is your research proposal. If you are invited for an interview, the proposal will be used as the basis for discussion. You will also be asked to make a verbal and visual presentation of the content of your proposal. The proposal should be no more than 1000 words. The outline below is a guide to the structure of your proposal. You should either use the headings below, or refer to them

as a checklist for the contents of a proposal that uses a different format. You should use accessible language, avoiding excessive specialist jargon as much as possible. If you do use specialist jargon, be sure to introduce it adequately.

Title

This should state the main topic of your enquiry, its questions and potential argument or standpoint. This will be a working title, which will inevitably change over the course of a project, but it is important that you are as specific as possible even at this stage. The title should be brief, and identify the main research thrust of the project. You should avoid over-long or technical words, and vague phrases such as 'an investigation into ...'.

Subject area

Define your subject area and field(s) of enquiry. Discuss if your project combines disciplines.

Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

State the research question(s) of the project. Include a set of Aims (overall strategic goals) and Objectives (specific deliverable outcomes) that will guide your research. You may find it helpful to think about the main concerns of your project as questions you are asking, and to which you hope to find answers. The aims and objectives are important because they state the criteria against which the success or failure of your project can be assessed.

Aims are the most significant problems you hope to tackle. Objectives are the steps by which you will meet these aims. Your proposal should normally have one or two aims. Each Aim should have a number of Objectives attached to it. The idea is that by the time you have met all your Objectives, you should have achieved your Aims and completed the project. Breaking down your project into Objectives, should also help you develop an initial **Work plan** (see below).

Context

It is essential to identify the contemporary and historical work – scholarly and practical – that relates to your field of investigation. This allows you:

- To demonstrate that you are aware of the field(s) in which you are working, and the current state of knowledge
- To identify a knowledge gap, and demonstrate how your proposed research will make an original contribution to knowledge in your identified field(s)

You should:

- Include good-sized images of the examples of relevant design work that you discuss
- Include reference to your own previous work in the subject area, and state how this new project builds on what you have done before

Methodology

Your methodology identifies how you will conduct your research. It is the means by which you generate evidence for your knowledge claims and your overall argument. You may need different methodologies for different objectives. Your research strategies, approaches and methods will need to be clearly identified:

- What is the theoretical basis of your methodology?
- Describe the methods and procedures you will use to discover, generate and record research information and data
- If your project incorporates creative design practice, what research work does the practice

- do?
- How will you record what you do, and keep track of what you have done?

Ethical dimensions of your research

If your project involves the direct participation of human subjects (i.e. people), you will need to consider any research ethics implications of your project. In broad terms, the University expects research to respect all participants' rights (commercial, intellectual and civil, dignity (including privacy and confidentiality), safety and wellbeing.

Work plan

Make a provisional prediction of the major stages of project work in each year of study. Will any stages of the research run concurrently? In what order are the Objectives to be completed?

Intended format of final submission

There are two available formats (see Faculty webpages above for guidance on respective word count):

- 1) Written dissertation only
- 2) Creative practical work / design practice + written component

If you choose format 2), what will the creative practical work comprise? How many elements will it have? How will it be assessed as research? Is the research contribution in the process and/or the design outcomes produced?

Audience

The first audience for your PhD submission will be the examiners who assess it. The second audience is the wider academic community, particularly those in the field(s) in which you are making an original contribution to knowledge. But who are the wider audiences for your research, perhaps in professional practice, policy-making, popular culture? Who do you want to reach with your research? How might you do so?

Bibliography

List the main reference works which you will inform use your research. These may be films, paintings, TV programmes, curated collections or websites, as well as books and journal articles. Use the Harvard referencing system, as follows: surname(s) of author(s) / editor(s), initials, date of publication (in brackets) title and sub-title (if any), volume / series and issue number (if any), edition (if not the first), place of publication (if known), publisher.

Who to contact for further advice:

- For specific advice on preparing your proposal contact Dr Ersi Ioannidou, PGR Student Director in The Design School, e.ioannidou@kingston.ac.uk
- Detailed information on general aspects of research degrees in the Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture at Kingston University (e.g. fees, duration of study, word count) is available at these two weblinks:
http://fada.kingston.ac.uk/research/degrees/research_degrees.php
<http://www.kingston.ac.uk/research/postgraduate-research/>

- If your enquiry is about the application process or funding availability and deadlines or you have made an application and would like an update on its progress please contact our faculty Research Office: e.day@kingston.ac.uk