Programme Specification for PG Certificate in Research Methods

This document applies to Academic Year 2022/23 onwards

1.	**Awarding institution/body**	University of Worcester
2.	**Teaching institution**	University of Worcester
3.	**Programme accredited by**	NA
4.	**Final award or awards**	PG Certificate
5.	**Programme title**	PG Certificate in Research Methods
6.	**Pathways available**	NA
7.	**Mode and/or site of delivery**	Taught programme
8.	**Mode of attendance and duration**	This a part-time course; students undertaking the course will always be registered on an MPhil or PhD programme which itself may be full-time or part-time. Students who are FT on the MPhil/PhD programme will normally complete this course within 12 months; students who are PT on the MPhil/PhD programme will normally complete this course in 24 months.
9.	**UCAS Code**	N/A
10.	**Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement**	The programme is mapped on to Vitae's Researcher Development Framework and on to the QAA's *Master's Degree Characteristics*.
11.	**Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision**	New module RSDP4005 to replace RSDP 4002 & 4003, approved by RSLTQC, July 2022

12. Educational aims of the programme

This programme is a constituent element of the University's MPhil and PhD programmes and is not offered as a standalone award. As such, it is designed to support the student in the initial stages of the MPhil/PhD programmes by developing and enhancing the student's skills, knowledge and understanding as a researcher thus enabling them to effectively plan, design and present the programme of research for their MPhil or PhD and positioning them to successfully deliver this programme.

This will be achieved by:

1. Enabling the student to identify gaps in their research skills and capabilities, and their knowledge and understanding of research both generally and specific to their field of study
2. Developing and enhancing the student's research skills and capabilities
3. Developing and enhancing the student's knowledge and understanding of methods, techniques, tools, approaches and theories relevant to their research area
4. Developing the student's cognitive and intellectual skills
5. Developing the student's communication skills

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
1.	Critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in their field of study	RSDP4001, RSDP4005, RSDP4004
2.	Identify and select research methods, techniques, tools, approaches, or theories appropriate to their own research and apply these as appropriate	RSDP4005, RSDP4004
3.	Demonstrate the capacity to adopt a critically informed, reflective and reflexive approach to knowledge in their field of study and to apply this to their own work	RSDP4005, RSDP4004

Cognitive and Intellectual skills

4.	Synthesise complex arguments and ideas	RSDP4001, RSDP4005, RSDP4004
5.	Construct comprehensive, informed, current, complex, and intellectually coherent arguments in their field of study	RSDP4005, RSDP4004

Skills and capabilities related to employability

6.	Identify and access appropriate bibliographical resources, archives, and other sources of relevant information	RSDP4001
7.	Design and execute systems for the acquisition and collation of information through the effective use of appropriate resources and equipment	RSDP4001, RSDP4005, RSDP4004
8.	Apply effective project management through the setting of research goals, identifying risks, contingency planning and prioritisation of activities	RSDP4004

Transferable/key skills

9.	Write clearly and in a style appropriate to purpose, e.g. progress reports, published documents, thesis	RSDP4001, RSDP4005
10.	Construct coherent arguments and articulate ideas clearly to a range of audiences, formally and informally through a variety of techniques	RSDP4005, RSDP4004
11.	Constructively defend research decisions and outcomes	RSDP4005, RSDP4004

Learning, teaching and assessment

As noted, the programme is designed to ensure the student is able to develop a programme of research that meets with the requirements of their MPhil or PhD and that they develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours that will support the delivery of this programme, As such, the student's supervisors play a key role in learning and teaching methods for this PG Cert. The course team, alongside other senior researchers across the University, will deliver teaching and learning through a variety of methods: primarily interactive workshops and practicals with some lectures; these will be delivered both face-to-face and virtually. In addition, short online courses will be offered, particularly for generic skills, such as time management and project management, and for research tools such as r, SPSS and NVivo. The programme will use the VLE to support face-to-face teaching and to deliver virtual and online teaching. Fundamentally, this delivery will be scaffolded by the support of the supervisory team who will ensure that learning is applied to the student's specific project and to the development of their programme of research.

Teaching

Students are taught through a combination of interactive workshops, lectures, online courses, practical sessions (including lab sessions), and fieldwork as appropriate to the student's field of study:

- Interactive workshops take a variety of formats and are intended to enable the application of learning through discussion and small group activities.
- Lectures are focused on imparting high-level information relevant to students across subject areas.
- Online courses are focused on developing general research skills.
- Practical sessions and fieldwork are focused on developing subject specific research skills.

In addition, students will be supported by their research degree supervisors on a regular basis as part of their wider programme.

The University places emphasis on enabling students to develop the independent learning capabilities that will equip them for lifelong learning and future employment, as well as academic achievement. A mixture of independent study, teaching and academic support from the Research Scholl and Library Services, and also the supervisory team enables students to reflect on progress and build up a profile of skills, achievements and experiences that will help them to flourish and be successful.

Contact time

A FT MPhil/PhD student can expect an average of 3 hours contact per week with the course team; a PT MPhil/PhD student can expect 1.5 hours contact per week with the course team. However, this contact will vary on a week-to-week basis, given that modules are delivered in teaching "blocks" and through "micro-courses" which are delivered in a number of different ways. This contact time needs to be set in the context of their wider MPhil/PhD programme.

Independent self-study

In addition to the contact time, FT MPhil/PhD students are expected to undertake 18 hours and PT MPhil/PhD students 9 hours of personal self-study per week focused on the PG Cert, although again this needs to be set in the context of their MPhil/PhD study. Fundamentally, engagement with the PG Cert should be seen as complimentary and supportive of the wider programme rather than distinct.

Independent learning is supported by a range of excellent learning facilities, including the dedicated Research Student space, Hive and library resources, the virtual learning environment, and extensive electronic learning resources, as well as the supervisory team.

Teaching staff

Students will be taught by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course. Details are included in the Course Handbook. The core team will be supported by professors and other senior researchers across the University, particularly in the delivery of subject specific research skills, approaches and methods.

Assessment

The course provides opportunities to test understanding and learning informally through the completion of practice or 'formative' assignments. Each module has one or more formal or 'summative' assessment which is graded and counts towards the overall module grade. It is important to re-emphasise that all assessment on the PG Cert is designed to support the student to develop and deliver their programme of research.

14. Assessment strategy

In line with the University of Worcester's Assessment Policy, the assessment strategy on the PG Cert has been designed to help ensure that students meet the learning outcomes for the course. Assessments have been linked towards facilitating the development of the skills this programme is designed to foster, whether the academic skills of knowledge and methodological application, the intellectual cognitive skills required for the successful completion of their MPhil or PhD, practice skills or transferrable skills applicable both to their ongoing study but also their future career (e.g. developing digital literacy, techniques of data collection, or skills in project design, management and execution). While our assessment strategy does seek to offer students a variety of challenges appropriate to the level of study, each preparing them in a different way for their MPhil or PhD programme of research, that variety is also aimed towards fostering broader skills that will benefit them beyond their research degree programme.

The assessment strategy is designed such that the separate components (the development of subject expertise and theoretical sophistication, project design, literature review, methods, data collection/selection and analysis) are augmented throughout the modules with an endpoint – successful completion of the MPhil/PhD – always in mind. A full outline of assessment methods and weightings, mapped against learning outcomes, grade criteria, and assessment dates will be published in the course handbook with further, specific details included in module guides. In order, further, to meet the developmental aspects of the PG Cert, the course team are committed to a policy of timely and consistent feedback.

15. Programme structures and requirements

		Status **Mandatory (M) or Optional (O)**	
Module Code	**Module Title**	**Credits** (Number)	**PG Cert**
RSDP4001	Developing as a Researcher	15	M
RSDP4005	Approaches to Research	30	M
RSDP4004	Planning your Research Project	15	M
Total Credits		60	
PG Certificate To be awarded the PG Cert Research Methods students must successfully complete 60 credits at Level 7, RDSP4001, RDSP4005, and RDSP4004.			

16. QAA and professional academic standards and quality

This award is located at level 7. The academic Level of the course – embedded in the course content, Learning Outcomes, and assessment strategy – has been established in relation to the generic Master's level descriptor published in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the QAA's *Master's Degree Characteristics*. Further, the programme is mapped on to Vitae's Researcher Development Framework.

17. Support for students

Students are provided with:

- direct support from their supervisory team who will work with the student to develop an individualised programme of research based on the student's field of study and their specific development needs
- access to a wider programme of Research Student Development that builds on and scaffolds the PG Cert
- day to day support through the Research School
- access to a variety of resources through our VLE focused on research students
- training opportunities for career planning through the Research School and the Careers Service
- support through the International office for overseas students
- support through the Language Unit for International Students
- access to the Disability and Dyslexia Service *https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/*
- access to wider Student Support services *http://www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/index.htm*

18. Admissions

Students may only undertake this course if they have already been admitted to a research degree programme at the University of Worcester.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Students may claim RPL for the whole PG Cert (normally when they have completed a similar programme as part of a Masters by Research) or for individual modules in the course (normally where they have completed research methods modules as part of a Master's programme or they have comparative professional experience from working in a research context such as a lab).

Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found at http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/941.htm

19. Regulation of assessment

The course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 7 days (one week) of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 7 days (one week) will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- A student is entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student who fails 60 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

Requirements for Awards

Award	Requirement
PG Cert	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map

PG Cert awards are unclassified.

For further information on honours degree classification, see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

20. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

As noted above, this course is a component part of the MPhil and PhD programmes. A more detailed articulation of graduate destinations, employability and links with employers is provided in the Programme Specifications for these programmes.

Graduate destinations

A research degree is a pathway into a range of careers. It is fundamental to students seeking an academic career and for those seeking a research career, whether in Higher Education, the public sector or in industry. However, a research degree can also be a pathway into a number of other careers such as: teaching (outside of the HE context); business, health and social care. A series of publications by *Vitae* (What do researchers do?) have explored graduate destinations for doctoral graduates, highlighting both the variety of careers that these graduates enter and the variations between disciplines.

Employability

This course is designed to develop the student's intellectual and technical competencies in research to enable them to complete their MPhil or PhD programme successfully. In developing these competencies, however, the student will also develop a variety of transferable skills and capabilities related to employment such as project management skills, data management skills, working as part of a team, critical thinking, IT skills.

Links to employers

There are no course level links but individual projects may be dependent on specific links with other HEIs, public sector or voluntary sector organisations, and businesses who may be collaborators on the students programme of research or participants in the research or provide access to key resources or facilities.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are

provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in associated course documentation e.g. course handbooks, module outlines and module specifications.