

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AT READING

A guide for doctoral researchers and their supervisors

Undertaking a doctorate is a challenge for everyone, and even more so if you are not writing it in your first language. As an international/EU doctoral researcher at Reading, you can access a range of English language support services and resources during the course of your doctorate at no extra cost.

The Graduate School, in conjunction with the University's International Study and Language Institute (ISLI), has a range of courses designed to help doctoral researchers maintain, improve and develop their academic English.

This guide outlines what support is available from the Graduate School and ISLI and how you can access it.

The International Study and Language Institute (ISLI)

ISLI is located on the second floor of the Edith Morely (formerly HumSS) building. It provides a range of language courses, programmes and resources including pre-sessional tuition, the chance to learn a foreign language, and academic English language support to all Reading students, including doctoral researchers, through the Academic English Programme (AEP).

Academic English Programme (AEP)

The AEP is free to all international and EU fee-paying students from all departments and at any stage of study. It has an extensive range of courses including critical writing, speaking, listening, pronunciation, academic grammar and vocabulary, and Social English.

For detailed information about the AEP, please visit: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/ISLI/enhancing-studies/isli-aep.aspx>

The AEP is administered by ISLI and any enquiries should be sent to: aep@reading.ac.uk

The AEP is open to all students, from undergraduate to PhD. However, in addition to running the AEP, ISLI has put together a range of **thesis writing courses exclusively for doctoral researchers available via the Graduate School**.

These thesis writing courses will not focus on areas such as pronunciation and listening. Therefore, if you need support with aspects of English *other than* thesis writing, such as listening, speaking or pronunciation, you should contact the Academic English Programme directly.

Thesis writing support for doctoral researchers

What support do you need?

As a doctoral researcher, you are responsible for the progression of your research and your development as a professional researcher. Your supervisor can advise and guide you through your studies and it is important you discuss what areas and skills you need to acquire or improve in order to successfully complete your doctorate. This includes any support you need with academic English.

The Learning Needs Analysis – which all doctoral researchers should undertake at the outset of their studies with the input of their supervisors – now includes a section on English language skills and development. The template is available via the Graduate School website:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/training-and-development/gs-reading-researcher-development-programme.aspx>

It can be overwhelming and even stressful having to communicate in a different language for most of the day. Before arriving at Reading, your use of English may have been limited to the classroom or workplace setting. However, in order to complete your doctorate successfully, it is crucial you address any challenges you are facing with your English as soon as possible and access the tuition and resources that are available. It is likely that your supervisor and/or School Director for PGR Studies have supervised international doctoral researchers before and appreciate the challenges of undertaking a doctorate in another language.

What support we offer

The next section of this guide outlines the thesis writing courses available to international/EU doctoral researchers. If you have any questions about these, please email Dr Emma Minns who is the Graduate School contact for English language support: e.h.minns@reading.ac.uk

RRDP stand-alone sessions

As part of the Graduate School's Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP) the following stand-alone sessions will be available in 2017-18. Each session will focus on a particular area of academic English used in writing a thesis. Doctoral researchers can request a place on any of these sessions via the Graduate School's booking pages on the RISIS web portal. Sessions will be delivered in the Graduate School by ISLI staff. These sessions are available to international/EU doctoral researchers from all years and subject disciplines. Each session lasts for two hours and there will be approximately 25 places available in each session. These sessions will be lecture-style, with no opportunity to get feedback on your own work. If you want to cover similar topics and also have the chance to discuss your own work, then you may want to attend the six-week programme 'Academic language for doctoral thesis writing' outlined below on page 4.

Language for voice, stance and critical evaluation – Monday 22 January 2018

In doctoral level research writing, you are expected to develop a strong authorial voice, make your stance clear (i.e. your position in academic debates and attitude towards the work of other scholars) and demonstrate high levels of 'criticality'. This workshop will examine what doing these things means in

practice and how language helps you to do them. How the language of voice, stance and criticality may differ between academic disciplines will also be explored.

Language for the Literature Review – Monday 5 February 2018

Integral to a doctoral thesis is the review and discussion of the work of other scholars and theorists in your field. This workshop will examine the language used to report, contrast, synthesise and comment on ideas and arguments from relevant literature. The workshop will also explore potential linguistic differences in how literature is written about across academic disciplines.

Language for describing methods and reporting results – Monday 19 February 2018

This session will examine the language used to effectively communicate and justify your methodological approach, and to accurately describe research processes and data. It will be useful to international doctoral researchers in the Sciences and Social Sciences.

Language for discussion – Monday 5 March 2018

In your doctoral thesis, the discussion of findings and results is a key point at which your ability to critically analyse, interpret and evaluate is showcased. This session will focus on the language used for these functions as well as the language used for showing how your work relates to previous research and contributes to ongoing academic debates within your field. This session will be useful to all international doctoral researchers, particularly those in the Sciences and Social Sciences (N.B. those in the Arts and Humanities will also find aspects of the session useful).

Language for introductions and conclusions – Monday 19 March 2018

The Introduction of your thesis contextualises and justifies your research focus, and the Conclusion highlights the contribution you have made to your field by undertaking it. This session will examine the language and organisational patterns needed to effectively achieve the purposes of these two sections.

Six-week programmes

In 2017-18 the Graduate School and ISLI will be running three different six-week programmes that offer more intensive support than the stand-alone sessions mentioned above. These are not part of the RRDP (although attendance will count towards your RRDP record) and they are not listed on the RISIS web portal.

Programmes in the autumn term will run on Wednesdays from 11.00-13.00 and will take place in ISLI in the Edith Morley Building.

If you wish to attend any of the programmes outlined below, you need to do the following:

1. **Talk to your supervisor** – they need to know that you want to enrol on a programme and they need to approve your application. The Graduate School will email all supervisors of students who are accepted on a programme.
2. **Commit to attending all six sessions.** You must take attendance of these programmes seriously.
3. **Submit an application form.** These programmes are not available via the Graduate School's booking pages on the RISIS web portal. At the end of this guide is an application form. Please complete and email back to Dr Emma Minns – e.h.minns@reading.ac.uk If you have any questions please contact Dr Minns.

Programme 1

Writing language practice and development

This programme is aimed at doctoral researchers who have never undertaken an undergraduate or master's degree in English and who have an IELTS writing sub-score of 5.5 or 6.0 (or equivalent).

This programme will help you improve your writing ability by developing your understanding and use of the key grammatical and lexical (vocabulary) features of good academic written communication in English.

Through studying key features of good academic writing and practising your writing in the classroom, you will learn how to write with more clarity, precision and effectiveness and to achieve a clear academic 'voice'.

The six weeks will be constructed around the following topics:

- Information flow within a paragraph – to improve the clarity of your expression and ease of reader understanding of your ideas
- Complex noun phrase construction – to express complex academic concepts precisely and efficiently
- Clause construction and logical links – to help the reader understand how ideas relate within your text
- Verb forms - to accurately convey mood and tense
- Making your argument and voice clear in your writing – adding caution or strength to your claims & showing your position or 'stance' within an academic debate
- Bringing other writers into your text – to engage with the academic debates in your field in your writing

You will be encouraged to relate what you learn to your daily experiences of writing at university. Other problematic grammatical issues will be discussed as you raise them, and, if you would like to, you can bring in short examples of your current writing for us to analyse together.

This programme will run in 2017-18 each term for the following year groups:

Autumn term: 2nd and 3rd years

Spring term: 1st years

Summer term: All years

Programme 2

Academic language for doctoral thesis writing

This programme is aimed at doctoral researchers with an IELTS writing sub-score of 6.5 or above and will be useful to both students who haven't previously studied in an English language context as well as students who have completed an undergraduate or master's degree in English.

The course will look at all key components of a doctoral thesis with focus on the purpose, organisational structure and key language needed for each section. The six weeks of the course will include the following:

- Writing your Introduction: language and organisational patterns for establishing the relevance of your research focus, identifying your research niche, and outlining the purpose and structure of your thesis.
- Writing your Literature Review: language for reporting, comparing/contrasting and synthesising the ideas of other scholars, and establishing your own stance within an ongoing academic debate.
- Writing about methods: language for explaining and justifying methodological choices and describing research tools and processes.

- Writing about results: language for describing and analysing research findings.
- Discussion in your thesis: language for interpreting and evaluating results, and language for engaging with the wider scholarly debates related to your research project.
- Writing your conclusion: language for identifying key research outcomes, and talking about implications, limitations, and potential future research (N.B. writing the Abstract will also be covered in this lesson).

This programme will run in 2017-18 in the autumn and spring terms for the following year groups:

Autumn term: All years

Spring term: All years

Programme 3

Academic language: editing your thesis

This programme is aimed at doctoral researchers who have started writing chapters of their thesis. You must have at least one chapter written for the course to be of use to you.

The course will provide hands-on workshops in which you are trained to use the tools of corpus linguistics to be able to independently improve the quality of your research writing. Corpus linguistics is the computational analysis of real-world language. In class, you will create a corpus of writing in your field as well as a corpus of your own writing. You will be able to use these *corpora* to better understand the nature of writing in your discipline and to critically reflect on your own writing in the field.

This programme will only run in 2017-18 in the summer term for 3rd / final year doctoral researchers

What to do now

If you are interested in any of the RRDP English language sessions, you will be able to request a place on them in December 2017 via the Graduate School booking pages on the RISIS web portal.

If you are interested in applying for a place on Programme 1 (autumn term only) or Programme 2 (autumn term only) please complete the application form below and return it to Dr Emma Minns. Application forms for spring term programmes will be available in December 2017.

If you have any questions about the thesis writing programmes or stand-alone sessions outlined above, please email Dr Emma Minns – e.h.minns@reading.ac.uk

Graduate School Thesis writing programmes - autumn term 2017

| | |
|---|--|
| Student last name | |
| Student first name | |
| Student number | |
| Year of study | |
| Full-time or Part-time | |
| University Email Address | |
| School/Department | |
| Supervisor's name and signature supporting this application | |

Programme you want to take (select only one):

| | |
|---|--|
| Programme 1 -Writing language practice and development Wed 1 November – Wed 6 December 2017 | |
| Programme 2 -Academic language for doctoral thesis writing Wed 1 November-Wed 6 December 2017 | |

If you are applying for a place on '**Writing language practice and development**' you must:

- Be in your 2nd or 3rd year
- Have never undertaken an undergraduate or postgraduate taught degree in English
- Have an IELTS writing sub-score of 5.5 or 6.0
- Have your supervisor's support to attend the programme
- Commit to attending all six sessions

Please give your IELTS writing sub-score (or equivalent):

If you are applying for a place on '**Academic language for doctoral thesis writing**' you must:

- Have an IELTS writing sub-score of 6.5 or above
- Have your supervisor's support to attend the programme
- Commit to attending all six sessions

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Student signature | Date |
| | |

Please complete this form and return it to Dr Emma Minns in the Graduate School:

e.h.minns@reading.ac.uk