

BIRMINGHAM INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN
Birmingham City University

Higher Degrees in Art and Design, Art and Design History, Architecture and Media

Research in BIAD and opportunities for research

We welcome enquiries from people who have a first class or upper second degree and/or a Master's qualification. We can also accredit prior industrial and professional learning and experience where relevant. We welcome both full and part-time students to our programme. We currently support 60 higher degree students in the following areas:

- archives, museums and galleries (including studies in exhibition design and interpretation)
- architecture and landscape architecture (including ecological and urban architecture)
- art education and pedagogy (including art and health, anthropology, curriculum design and delivery, history, philosophy, and psychology of art)
- fine art practice and theory (including art in the public sphere, innovation in materials and processes, performance and performativity, and the politics of interpretation and representation)
- history of art and design
- jewellery, silversmithing and horology (including materials research and innovative design)
- product, interior and theatre design (including design and consumption, innovation and risk in design, and design impact studies)
- visual communication and in particular virtual design and inclusive design
- electronic learning and teaching in all forms of art, design and media
- fashion and textiles and apparel design
- radio and TV production and journalism

Research degree students become members of BIAD Research Groups. These groups have access to funding and provide professional and social environments for students and staff. Applicants are invited to visit our website on www.biad.bcu.ac.uk/research/ to gain further information on our research groups and their strategic priorities.

Application

We do **not** issue forms initially. Instead we ask applicants to supply the following:-

- a) a two page outline of the intended research question to be addressed (preferably by email in a Word document) supported by relevant literature and, if appropriate, visual material preferably supplied electronically. NEVER SEND ORIGINAL WORK.
- b) a curriculum vitae (resumé) detailing academic career, and details of publications.
- c) two letters of support from academic referees who are in a position to assess the potential of both the candidate's ability to undertake higher degree research and a provisional view of the promise of the two page proposal (which they should refer to in their letter of support). These letters may be sent directly by the referees to us.
- d) copies of qualification certificates (i.e. MA or MSc or other relevant documents)
- e) For students from outside the European Community evidence of proficiency in English language

We undertake to reply within one month of receipt of the above documents.

Enrolment and Registration

1. Proposals are considered by at least two individuals, usually the Director of Research and another member of staff relevant to the topic proposed. We check that we have the expertise and resources to support the research and that the proposal lies within our research priority areas.
2. Candidates are invited to visit, if resident in Western Europe. For those unable to visit contact will be by phone, email and letter. The next stage is to have a formal interview with the BIAD Director of Research and another nominee to establish that:
 - a) the appropriate expertise, premises and resources are available within the faculty to support the research (we do not frequently involve expertise from without the University except for students undertaking a thesis by distance-learning)
 - b) the proposal looks feasible within the time and resource constraints that seem to be required.
 - c) the research appears timely, innovative, useful and contributes to BIAD research profile.

Candidates are enrolled once we are sure that their needs and our support are in place, and that their qualifications match our requirements.

3. Upon enrolment students are required to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice in Art and Design, which normally runs from September to February for full-time students, and September to April for part-time students. Attendance is mandatory for all students who do not have a postgraduate qualification in research practice.
4. A member of staff will take the student through procedures for enrolment, preparation of the proposal and registration. This member of staff assists the student in preparing a registration document which will be examined by a scrutiny panel in BIAD and then by the university's Research Degrees Committee (RDC). Students should remember, however, that the proposal they present remains their own responsibility and relies on the strength of their thinking and ability. The faculty panel is drawn from appropriately experienced staff not involved in preparing the proposal. The panel requires that the application is acceptable to all its members before recommending that it goes forward to the University. Only when RDC approves the proposal is it registered.

Student and Staff Responsibilities during registration

At registration a Director of Studies and at least one other supervisor are appointed for the duration of registration. At this point Students are required to undertake a research training programme to assist in the selection of appropriate methodologies of the research topic.

Upon registration students agree:

- (1) to undertake the PgCert in Research Practice in Art & Design
- (2) to make an annual plan of activities which are updated thereafter on an annual basis.
- (3) to prepare a brief abstract of the topic to join those from all the other higher degree students on our research website.
- (4) to provide an annual report on progress and plan for the subsequent year
- (5) to attend and to contribute to the biannual whole day research conferences
- (6) to make a presentation, at least once every two years, relating to methodological issues raised by their research at the monthly seminar series

We agree to offer all research students:-

- (1) research training necessary for their topic. This is specifically delivered through the PgCert in the first year. This is a requirement which is offered to all students and provided essential skills and contextual knowledge development in the early stages of preparation and registration. Group classes are also provided in NUD*IST and Endnote. Every opportunity is taken to engage with AHRC doctoral training support and to involve students in project work within AHRC funded university consortia for the 'Research Training Initiative'. Currently we are hosting an AHRC-sponsored training network in ethical issues in art and design research.
- (2) staff-student seminars and conferences on a regular basis. These concentrate on issues of research methodology. A standing item at each event is a session for student feedback both to student representatives and to staff. These views are forwarded for consideration by the Board of Studies (see [7] below)
- (3) opportunity to participate in BCU's training to teach programme devised for research students across the university
- (4) Close scrutiny of their own and their supervisors' annual reports to ensure that progress is unimpeded. These reports are considered by BIAD Research Subcommittee for Higher Degrees and presented to RDC. The subcommittee pays particular attention to workload on both student and supervisors and seeks to remain assured that :
 - i no higher degree student teaches for more than 4 hours per week averaged over the year
 - ii no student is employed without formal induction or mentoring
 - iii no supervisor's load of supervision or other duties endangers the frequency and quality of contact with students
- (5) A system of conflict resolution for any difficulties arising during registration. A personal tutor is appointed for each student who is unconnected with the student's supervision to whom to refer initially in any case of disagreement or conflict with members of the supervisory team. The personal tutor counsels and supports the student in the event of any formal complaint by the student. The Dean investigates such complaints and decides upon appropriate remedies.
- (6) If the Director of Studies is absent for a period longer than one month a caretaker is appointed until the Director of Studies returns. This person may be another of the student's supervisory team or another member of university staff

- (7) A board of studies ('The Higher Degree Board of Studies') that plans research events and receives items raised by students for action or remedy by their representatives
- (8) Assistance in preparation for the defence of the student's thesis both in written and verbal form. Students are reminded, however, that the decision when to submit remains their privilege and responsibility

Facilities for Research Students

Students are provided with specific and secure workplaces, computers/server space and a photocopier. Currently there are 4 such dedicated rooms within the Faculty.

Annual Progress Monitoring Procedures

Students progress is monitored through tutorials and tutorial reports, supervisor reports and student plans. These are considered, collated and form an ongoing progress profile which is reviewed through the Faculty Research Degrees Committee. Subsequently student progress forms a major part of the Faculty's report to the University's Research Degrees Committee.

Representation and other feedback

Two student representatives have membership of the combined Board of Studies for the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice and Research Degrees. Students are encouraged to hold their own forum meetings and are also provided with specific meetings with the Director of Research at most events in the Seminar Programme.

Personal development planning

BIAD's research students will operate personal development planning via the delivery of the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice from September 2006. Students will benefit from work developed centrally with the faculty and University. They will follow an existing benchmarked postgraduate process, tailored for the needs of BIADs students.

BIAD Research Degrees Sub-Committee

BIAD Research Committee oversees the faculty's Research Degrees Sub-committee. This sub-committee has devolved responsibilities from the University Research Degrees Committee. BIAD Research Degrees Sub-Committee is specifically responsible for the care and monitoring of the progress of M.Phil and PhD students, and detailed involvement in the preparation of registrations, transfers and examinations

Currently two meetings are held each year. Membership comprises: the Chair of Research Committee, the Deputy Chair of Research Committee, two members of Research Committee with current and extensive supervisory experience and up to two co-options (not necessarily members of the parent committee).

Key faculty contacts

Nick Stanley, Director of Research, BIAD to whom all documents should be sent.
(nick.stanley@bcu.ac.uk)

Jenny Hewings, Personal Assistant to Nick Stanley for advice on the progress of applications and for support for enrolled students (jenny.hewings@bcu.ac.uk)