

A Northern Bridge DTP Glossary of Academic Terms

This glossary provides definitions for academic terms that were identified as unclear or inaccessible by Northern Bridge students during our survey and workshop. It aims to improve understanding and accessibility for all students, particularly those from non-traditional, international, or diverse backgrounds.

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1 + 3 PhD - A structured PhD programme where students first complete a one-year master's degree (the "1") before progressing to a three-year PhD (the "3"). This model is commonly used in doctoral training partnerships.

A

Academia – The environment and community of scholars, researchers, and educators in higher education and research institutions.

Academic Vocabulary – Specialised terminology used within academic writing and discussions.

Annual Review / Annual Progression – A yearly review, usually comprising a panel that assesses the progression of your PhD project.

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) – National funding agency supporting arts and humanities research and study in the UK. See more [here](#).

Applicant – A person applying for a PhD programme, funding, or academic position.

Advisor – Most common in North America, this term might be used to refer to a PhD supervisor.

B

Blind Peer Review – A process used in academic publishing where the identity of the author is hidden from the reviewers (single-blind) or both the author and reviewers remain anonymous (double-blind). This ensures that evaluations are based solely on the quality of the research without bias.

C

Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) – A type of PhD funding where a student works in partnership with a university and an external organisation.

Consortium – A group of universities, research institutions, or organisations that collaborate to provide joint funding, training, or resources for research projects and doctoral programmes.

Context (Research Context) – The background, setting, or circumstances that shape a research project, including previous studies and theoretical frameworks.

Critical Thinking – The ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesise information objectively and logically.

D

Data Management Plan – A formal document outlining how research data will be collected, stored, processed, and shared, ensuring ethical and legal compliance, particularly for funded research projects.

DCAD (Durham Centre for Academic Development) – A support centre at Durham University that provides academic skills training.

Deduction – A logical reasoning process that draws specific conclusions from general principles or theories. In research, deductive reasoning tests hypotheses by applying broad theoretical frameworks to particular cases.

Doctoral Landscape Award – A funding initiative by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) that supports large-scale doctoral training programmes across multiple institutions. These awards aim to strengthen research environments and develop new training opportunities. Read more [here](#).

Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) – A consortium of universities offering PhD funding and training in collaboration with funding bodies.

Double Marking – A system where two academics independently assess and grade a piece of work to ensure fairness.

E

Early Career Researcher (ECR) – A researcher in the first few years following their PhD, often working on postdoctoral projects or short-term contracts.

Epistemology – In academia, epistemology examines how we know what we know and the validity of different research approaches.

Ethnography – A qualitative research method focused on studying people and cultures through observation and participation.

Examination Panel / Examiners – A group of academics who assess a PhD thesis and conduct the viva (oral defence). It is composed by an internal staff member and an external member, from another academic institution.

F

Fellowship – It can refer to either a funding award or an academic position that supports researchers at various career stages. Fellowships may provide financial support for independent research, professional development, or short-term academic roles.

H

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) – Universities, colleges, and research institutes that provide undergraduate and postgraduate education, as well as conduct research.

High-Impact Journal – An academic journal with significant influence in its field, often determined by citation metrics.

Host Institution – The university or organisation where a student is based for their studies or research.

I

INTO (Newcastle INTO Centre) – A programme that provides academic and English language support for international students at Newcastle University.

Induction – An introductory event or programme designed to familiarise new students with university life, resources, and expectations.

iRISE (Inclusive Research and Innovation Support Environment) – A support programme at Queen's University Belfast aimed at fostering inclusion in academia.

M

Methodology – The approach and techniques used in conducting research, including qualitative and quantitative methods.

Mode(s) of Analysis – The specific methods or approaches used to examine data, texts, or research materials. These can include qualitative, quantitative, theoretical, or critical analytical techniques.

N

Non-HE – Refers to organisations, institutions, or sectors outside the university system. In research contexts, this can refer to partnerships with businesses, public institutions, or cultural organisations. Refers to sectors or organisations that are not part of **Higher Education** (HE). In the context of academia or research, **Non-HE** typically describes industries, businesses, or other institutions outside of universities and colleges. This can include private sector companies, government bodies, charities, and other organisations that may engage in research, development, or professional practice but do not offer higher education programmes.

Northern Bridge Consortium (NBC) – Northern Bridge Consortium is a Doctoral Training Partnership funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It brings together the cutting-edge expertise and exceptional resources of Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Queen's University Belfast, Sunderland University, Teesside University and Ulster University and their non-HE partner organisations. See more [here](#).

O

Open-Access Publication – A research output (such as a journal article or book) that is freely available to the public without paywalls. Open access ensures wider dissemination of academic knowledge and is often required by research funders.

P

PhD Student/Candidate – In the UK, both are often used interchangeably in casual conversation, but they can have slightly different meanings depending on the university's specific terminology or stage of the research degree. A **PhD Student** refers to anyone enrolled in a PhD programme, regardless of their stage in the process and is a term typically used to describe students in the early or mid-stages of their research. A **PhD Candidate** is sometimes used to refer to a student who has progressed beyond an initial review or formal assessment. At this stage, the student has demonstrated sufficient progress and potential to complete the PhD.

Postdoctoral Studies / Research (Postdoc) – Research undertaken after completing a PhD, often as part of a fellowship or fixed-term contract.

Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) – A student conducting research at the postgraduate level, including PhD and research master's students. Postgraduate research entails contributing new knowledge to a specific field of study. Research degrees are usually self-directed and involve little

to no formal taught elements but are supervised by an experienced specialist(s) in that field of study.

Practice-Based PhD – A doctoral programme that allows research to be conducted and presented through creative or practical outputs (such as artefacts, compositions, images, installations, performances, or written manuscript) alongside a critical reflective component, rather than solely through a traditional written thesis.

Principal Investigator (PI) – An academic who has overall responsibility for the design and management of a research project, from its inception to the delivery of results and dissemination, leading a team of researchers. The PI is the lead researcher and is accountable for the overseeing the research team, managing the budget, ensuring ethical and regulatory compliance, and meeting the requirements of the funding body. PIs are typically experienced researchers holding senior or permanent positions within their institution. They act as the main point of contact with the funding body.

Q

Qualitative Research – A research approach that focuses on understanding human experiences, behaviours, and social contexts through non-numerical data. It involves collecting and analysing data such as interviews, focus groups, observations, or texts to explore meanings, concepts, and perspectives. Qualitative research aims to provide in-depth insight rather than statistical generalisation and is commonly used in the social sciences and humanities.

Quantitative Research – A research approach that focuses on collecting and analysing numerical data to identify patterns, relationships, or trends. It uses statistical methods to measure variables, test hypotheses, and quantify outcomes. The goal is to produce objective, reliable results that can be generalised to larger populations. Quantitative research is commonly used in fields like psychology, economics, and health sciences.

R

Research Assistant (RA) – A researcher employed to support academic projects, often on a fixed-term basis.

Research Environment – In the context of a PhD or academia, the research environment refers to the physical, intellectual, and institutional setting in which research is conducted. This includes the resources, facilities, and equipment available to researchers, as well as the academic and

collaborative culture within the institution. A positive research environment ensures that researchers have the necessary support and mentorship to conduct high-quality research.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) – The UK’s system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions. Its main purposes are to inform the allocation of public research funding, demonstrate the value of public investment in research, and provide insight into the overall health of research in UK universities. See the latest REF here: <https://2029.ref.ac.uk/>.

Research Proposal – In the context of a UK PhD application, a research proposal is a concise document outlining your proposed research project, including its aims, methodology, and significance, to demonstrate your suitability and the feasibility of your research to potential supervisors and funding bodies. This is a key component of a PhD application.

Research Statement – Often used in PhD funding applications, a research statement is a document that summarises your research interests, experience, and future research plans, demonstrating your expertise and potential in your chosen field. The primary purpose of a research statement is to showcase your research capabilities and demonstrate why you are a suitable candidate for a PhD programme.

Reviewers – A team of expert academic staff responsible for assessing the annual progress of PhD students. Similar to examiners, they provide feedback and ensure that the student is meeting the required milestones for successful completion of their research degree.

S

Studentship – A form of funding offered for doctoral research. It typically includes a non-taxable stipend for living expenses which is paid directly to the PhD student in regular instalments and support for tuition fees. Some studentships (particularly those funded through research councils) also offer access to training, networking, and development opportunities. Studentships may be funded by universities, research councils, or external organisations. For studentships funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) see: <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/studentships-and-doctoral-training/get-a-studentship-to-fund-your-doctorate/>.

Student-Led PhD – This type of PhD programme allows students to design and propose their own research project, rather than working on one that is pre-defined by a university or external organisation. Students get to craft their own research question and conduct independent research based on their interests and expertise, guided by a supervisory team.

Supervisory Team – It consists of a minimum of two members, one of which is the main supervisor with other(s) act(s) as secondary. Supervisors are the main points of contact during the PhD and are responsible for mentoring and guiding a PhD student throughout their research. PhD

students have regular meetings with their supervisors, where they discuss their progress and receive feedback and support. If the research crosses discipline boundaries it is possible to have cross-departmental or cross-faculty supervisory arrangements. Depending on the subject, supervisory teams can also include an externally-based subject expert or an industry professional.

Symposium – A formal, often large-scale academic meeting that brings together expert researchers and practitioners to discuss and exchange knowledge, research findings, and insights on a specific topic or theme. The focus of a symposium is always clearly defined, with presentations and discussions centred around that central subject.

T

Teaching Fellow – A member of academic staff at a higher education institution, such as a university, whose primary role involves teaching, often on a fixed-term contract. Teaching Fellows carry out academic marking and provide students with feedback. This position may also involve designing academic courses and managing a range of administrative responsibilities.

Teaching/Education Track – Academics on this path primarily focus on teaching, mentoring, and developing educational materials. Their responsibilities include delivering lectures, leading seminars, creating assessments, and providing feedback.

Research Track – The primary emphasis of academics on this track is on conducting research, publishing findings, and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in a specific field. While the primary focus is research, some research track positions may also involve some teaching or mentoring responsibilities.

Terminology – The specific words and phrases used within a particular field or discipline.

U

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) – A non-departmental public body of the United Kingdom that directs research and innovation funding, sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). See more here: <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/about-uk-research-and-innovation/>.

V

Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) – A tool designed to help researchers, including PhD students and research staff, develop the skills and knowledge needed for a successful research career. It outlines key abilities, behaviours, and professional standards required for conducting research, collaborating with others, and making an impact. The framework is divided into different areas, with further detailed skills and competencies to guide researcher development. See more here: <https://vitae.ac.uk/vitae-researcher-development-framework/>.

Viva (*Viva Voce*) /'vʌɪvə/ – Meaning ‘living voice’ in Latin. A Viva is an oral examination where a doctoral candidate defends their thesis in front of a panel of academic experts. Based on this, the examination panel decides whether the requirements for the degree for which the candidate is registered have been met.