



Structure of the Higher Education Research, Evaluation and Enhancement (HEREE) PhD programme - video transcript

This short animation gives you an overview of how the Higher Education Research, Evaluation and Enhancement (HEREE) PhD works. This 100% online programme benefits from 25 years' experience offering higher education professionals a blended learning programme. Transferring that long experience and developing it over eight years as a fully online course means that the HEREE programme is now finely tuned to help you become a professional researcher, publishing work that makes a real difference to higher education in your own context and beyond it.

Year one

October

You begin the programme at the start of October and the first week is devoted to induction. Online learning has some similarities to being at a party: to be successful it needs people to be comfortable with each other, feeling relaxed and among friends. We even have a "Mocktail party" as part of the induction. So, much of induction week is about getting to know each other. Also, we make sure that everything is working for you, and that you know things like how to use Lancaster's library online, who to contact, and what is happening when.

Then the first of three core modules begins. This one is about policy and change processes in higher education, and it gives you a chance to think about changes that are significant for you and to view them with the conceptual and theoretical tools that we offer. Enhancement through research is the name of the game here. Inside the core modules is an integrated module designed to help you think about your professional practice in a conceptual and theoretical way.

Like both the other core modules, this one is divided into a structured learning part of about 15 weeks, and a student-led research part of the same length. Core modules involve:



- video lectures and conversations with specialists
- forum discussions
- working in small groups on topics of interest
- having live video conferences
- discussing case studies and case exhibits
- engaging with learning resources about, for example, achieving significance in your research
- getting feedback on your research ideas
- drawing from and adding to glossaries about concepts, theories and theorists

November year one - part one

November sees the first point of engagement with the research methods module. You focus on the methodological aspects of your research ideas for the core module. This week is also focused on helping you to prepare for your small assignment later in the month. This is very low stakes (not at PhD level - an opportunity to play with ideas). You are asked to give a skeleton plan of the research for the module: in this case something around policy, change and enhancement which is important to you. You'll get feedback on this, to make sure that you are heading in the right direction.

December year one - part one

The structured part of the module continues, with a break of two weeks at the end of December and into January.

January year one - part one

In the middle of January the structured part of the core module finishes, and now is your chance to focus entirely on your research paper. Of course, you will have the opportunity to talk to other members of your cohort, and with the module leader. Most cohorts form little groups with similar interests and help each other as they develop their research.



February year one - part one

In February you are asked to complete a very short assignment for the research methods support module in which you choose three PhD abstracts that are close to your topic, and evaluate them. This helps you think about the overall design of your own approach, and about its significance to journal readers.

March year one - part one

In each of the three core modules you have the opportunity to get formative feedback in great detail on a draft of your research assignment: the Prelim (preliminary submission). This will help you to do the best you can for the Final submission, and aims to help you achieve publishability. The model of the three big assignments that you write in Part one is submitting to a journal article, and this Prelim feedback is just like the feedback you get from peer reviewers of a journal. You make amendments based on their comments and then submit your final version to the editor, except in this case it is your module leader who gives comments and receives the final version. As you see, there is another point of engagement with the research methods module. This one helps you reflect on the methodological aspects raised in the Prelim submission, and to prepare for the Final submission of your research paper.

April year one - part one

So in April you submit your final submission, and we hope that you will also submit this work to a journal for publication once you have had a mark and feedback. The feedback will offer suggestions about publishing. That's why we emphasise that this is a publish-as-you-go programme. If problems remain with your final submission you do have the opportunity for resubmission before you continue to the next core module.



May year one - part one

This month, the next core module starts, and the pattern is exactly the same as before with structured part followed by a student-led research part. Here the topic is evaluation in higher education.

June year one - part one

Once again, an early small assignment gives you the opportunity to get feedback about your ideas for research on evaluation: it's only 2300 words and is low stakes.

July year one - part one

In July there is another point of engagement: a week in which you focus on the methodological aspects of your research for the core module.

August year one - part one

In this month you again switch to the student-led research mode, doing the research for your paper on evaluation in higher education, and preparing for your prelim submission. Again, talking with peers and with the module tutor is important. But the focus now has gone beyond giving you the tools, concepts and theories, familiarity with the literature in this area and is now entirely upon your own topic and those related ones of your peers. Collaboration and peer feedback is really encouraged.

September year one - part one

This continues in September...



Year two

October year two - part one

... so that you are ready to submit your Prelim towards the end of October to get detailed feedback from your module tutor

November year two - part one

As before, the feedback comes two or three weeks later, and again there is a week of engagement with the research methods module to assist you in thinking through and talking about the methodological aspects of your research, ready for the Final submission, towards the end of the month.

December year two - part one

As you see, December finishes with a research methods module, a small assignment reflecting on the methodological aspects of your recently submitted paper. Two core modules are now completed, with only one more to go. By this stage should have at least one paper submitted to an academic journal.

January year two - part one

This month sees the beginning of the core module on enhancing learning, teaching and assessment. The design is the same as before, with a structured part and a student-led part.

February year two - part one

As you have guessed by now, there is a small assignment helping you to plan your research paper for this module. Again it is low stakes, giving you the opportunity to play with ideas and get feedback.



March year two - part one

Again, there is a week of engagement with the research methods module. This one is slightly different though, because you are thinking beyond the research paper for the core module and instead beginning to plan for part two of the programme, the part in which you are researching and writing your thesis with the help of specialist supervisor.

April year two - part one

Another week of engagement occurs towards the end of April, and this one - by contrast – IS focused on the methodological aspects of the research paper you are writing for the learning and teaching core module. You can also reflect on any methods aspects brought up in the feedback on your small assignment in February in which you planned the research paper for this module.

May year two - part one

An important point happens towards the end of May when you write a small assignment planning your part 2 research project, and get feedback on it. As you see the focus is now beginning to shift towards the next stage of the programme. This small assignment has been supported of course by the week of methodological engagement in April, and it is the first step towards writing your formal research plan for part two: the “confirmation document” as it is oddly called.

June year two - part one

There is a final week of engagement with the research methods support module, helping you prepare for the Prelim submission for the core module, which also happens this month.



July year two - part one

As usual, you get detailed feedback on your prelim submission and this helps you to produce a really good final submission at the end of the month. Again, that is marked to PhD standard and should be suitable for submission to an academic journal.

August and September year two - part one

The next couple of months are devoted to preparing your confirmation document: your research proposal for part two which is assessed by a panel of three academics to ensure that you are well set up for researching and writing your thesis, with a topic that is significant and practicable. You will get detailed feedback and, if necessary, an opportunity to resubmit. Lancaster University wants to ensure that you move into part two with a clear, doable plan so that you and your supervisor can move forward in confidence to a great result 2 years later. In October you formally be in Part two.

October year three - part two

With the help of your supervisor, you research and write up a topic of keen interest to you. Thesis is 45,000 words, shorter than a traditional thesis because you have already written 21,000 words at PhD standard in part one. Two examiners read your thesis and will conduct an oral exam, a viva, with you. This usually takes around an hour, and is most often conducted remotely.

After the thesis is approved, it's time to celebrate!!

Paul Trowler, April 2020