

RESEARCH LIKE
YOU **MEAN IT!**

OFFER HOLDERS WELCOME & AMBASSADOR PANEL 2026

WEDNESDAY 13 MAY 2-3PM

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES



Reminder - This session will be recorded

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YOUR PANEL TODAY:

Anthony Morris

PGR Marketing Officer

Charles Rhodes

PGR Admissions Officer

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

ACADEMIC WELCOME

**Dr Joseph McGonagle - PGR Director in School of Arts, Languages
and Cultures.**

AMBASSADOR PANEL

Tunde-Success Osideko - PhD Business and Management

Amy Todd - PhD English and American Studies

Luman Zhou - PhD Education

BulBul Prakash - PhD Politics

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WELCOME

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES



**Dr Joseph McGonagle - PGR Director in
School of Arts, Languages and Cultures.**

Congratulations - receiving an offer for PhD study is a major achievement!

Welcome to the Faculty of Humanities

- One of the largest and most interdisciplinary Humanities research communities in Europe.
- The Faculty brings together over 1,000 postgraduate researchers across four Schools bringing together intellectual diversity, access to different methodologies and the chance to collaborate across subject areas.
- Research with real-world impact: our research at Manchester is explicitly connected to major societal challenges: inequality, sustainability, culture, policy, cities, education, health, migration, digital futures and global justice.
- Overall, 93% of the University's research activity was assessed as 'world-leading' (4*) or 'internationally excellent' (3*) (REF2021) with several Humanities subjects ranked within the top 3 in the UK.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER STRUCTURE

FACULTY OF
BIOLOGY
MEDICINE AND
HEALTH

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

We are home to more than 1,100
postgraduate researchers.

Alliance
Manchester
Business School
(160)

School of Arts,
Languages and
Cultures
(329)

School of
Environment,
Education and
Development
(368)

School of Social
Sciences
(323)

FACULTY OF
SCIENCE AND
ENGINEERING

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WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A HUMANITIES PhD?

NETWORKS

Manchester attracts researchers from around the world and has extensive international partnerships and collaborations.

This means you benefit from being part of a global peer community, worldwide research connections and a strong international reputation.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

A Manchester PhD is increasingly framed as preparation for multiple futures, not just in academia but policy, NGOs, cultural institutions, publishing, consultancy, public sector leadership and creative industries.

PhD students have the opportunity to gain experience in teaching, public engagement, conference organisation, grant writing, interdisciplinary collaboration, impact and engagement work as well as three month placements coordinated with our partners and Doctoral Academy.

PGR COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING

The Humanities Doctoral Academy gives students:

- dedicated PGR support;
- researcher development training;
- interdisciplinary events;
- wellbeing and progression support;
- networking opportunities across the Faculty.

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ADMISSIONS UPDATE - DOCTORAL ACADEMY

CHARLES RHODES

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OVER TO OUR AMBASSADORS

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Tunde-Success Osideko
PhD Business and Management



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Studies



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STARTING STEPS



What's one thing you wish you'd known before beginning your PhD at Manchester?

Best advice for next 6 months before starting PhD?

Preparation before moving in to Manchester?

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PhD DAY TO DAY

Could you describe an average week?

How do you prioritise/schedule your reading?

When do you create a dissertation timeline?

What are some good approaches to structuring time and staying on track with milestones? Are there any particularly useful tools/software?

Typical schedule of PhD students?

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PhD COMMUNITY



How did you go about building your initial network—both socially and academically?

Are there informal or structured opportunities to build relationships with fellow researchers across the School or Faculty?

Do you think it's easy to create community as a PGR student?

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH
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POST-EVENT QUESTION 1: Anything you wished you'd known at the start?

- That you can't fully prepare, and that's okay
- I wish I'd known earlier that uncertainty is part of the process, and it is okay to be vulnerable
- The relationship with your supervisors matters more than anything. Build it early and consistently

Tunde-Success

Everyone's project is different, works in different ways, their programme might have different expectations. Try not to compare and take what is useful advice, and leave the rest. I was told I would not be able to do my PhD whilst working - now I work a 2 day a week job, have a young child with no childcare and manage a PhD. I was told that I would need to think about methods and data - again, in my case this is not necessary. Just focus on your project and priorities and trust your supervisors.

Amy

I wish I had known earlier that PhD programmes can be either part-time or full-time. Many PhD students are at different life stages, so it's worth discussing the options with supervisors or the admissions team before starting. I only realised this near the end of my PhD, and knowing it earlier might have influenced some of my own decisions.

I also wish I had connected with current PhD students or recent graduates before starting. Talking to people with real experience can help you understand what the PhD journey is actually like, learn practical advice, and avoid unnecessary stress or confusion.

Luman

How quickly time passes during a PhD. Having a proper timeline early on would have helped a lot. I also wish I had understood the value of doing an initial scoping trip before fieldwork, learning more about ethics approval processes early, and planning teaching responsibilities carefully. Looking back, I think it's much better to take on teaching earlier in the PhD and leave the final year focused only on writing and completion.

Bulbul

POST-EVENT QUESTION 2: If I were starting in September, what would I do now?

- Read your supervisors' recent work to understand their research, focus, and strengths
- Quietly upgrade your research methods skills; the jump from master's to doctoral level is real, and nobody warns you
- Ask yourself honestly why you're doing this; that answer will carry you through the hard patches

Read - get a really good grasp on what is happening in your academic area right now - who are the authors, journals, organisations that are doing the work you want to do and be part of. Create a note taking system that works for you - this could be notebooks, it could be sticking things in various word docs, it could be a project management tool - whatever works for you.

Amy

- If I were starting in September, I would use the summer to properly rest, travel, and do the things I enjoy before beginning the PhD. Once the programme starts, especially in the first year, it can be quite intense both academically and mentally.
- I think the first year is a major transition period for most people, with lots of ups and downs. But once you successfully get through that stage, things usually become much more manageable afterwards.

Luman

I would spend more time refining my proposal and preparing practically for the move, things like knowing what to pack, securing legitimate housing, sorting health checks and prescriptions, and learning more about the university and Manchester itself. One thing that helped was connecting with people joining in September through WhatsApp groups organised by the university.

Bulbul

POST-EVENT QUESTION 3: Biggest Challenge?

- Learning to protect time for thinking when everything else felt more urgent
- Trying to find conceptual clarity in my research area

Tunde-Success

I struggled in my first year, I think my communication style and my supervisors were at odds at times and I wasn't always clear on their expectations of me in my role. So often I would email and ask for advice or thoughts, whereas they wanted to keep these things to in person meetings that we had every 3 weeks. There were some comments that they expected me to be more present around the campus, and attending events within the school - whereas I thought if they weren't directly related to my subject then it would not be the best use of my time. Looking back - I think they were nervous because they hadn't seen enough of my work to feel comfortable that I could do this research, within the timeframe, and to the rigorous standards demanded. This all just took time - now we have a great, very relaxed relationship. So I would say it is important to just say; how do you want to communicate, how often shall we meet, how do you want to work, what are your expectations of how I should be spending my time?

Amy

- I think the challenges are different for everyone because every research project is unique. It's important to trust your supervisor, communicate openly, and work together to find the best path for your project.
- For me personally, the biggest challenge was the shift in identity – moving from a non-academic mindset into becoming a researcher and scholar. I see the PhD as a journey of learning professional research skills. Like learning any new skill, you naturally go from beginner to more experienced over time, and that process can be emotionally and mentally challenging.
- I would encourage new PhD students to keep an “empty cup” mindset. No matter how successful you were before, once you start a PhD, it helps to approach things with humility and a willingness to learn from scratch. Don't be afraid to ask questions, even if they seem basic-honestly, the more questions you ask, the faster you grow. Seeing yourself as a learner also makes challenges feel less intimidating.

Luman

Confidence was probably the biggest challenge initially. I didn't really gain confidence in my own work until after my scoping trip in the beginning of second year. Adjusting to a completely different culture was difficult too. I had to push myself to socialise and adapt, even in small everyday conversations where I often felt out of place at first.

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POST-EVENT QUESTION 4: Tips on time management for PT study, balancing career and family life?

- Block your PhD time in the calendar and treat it like any other serious commitment
- Two focused hours beat six distracted ones every time
- Be upfront with the people around you about your schedule
- Stop chasing the perfect week
- Your mental health is important, schedule time for fun activities as well

Tunde-Success

I feel that if you are used to spinning plates - having a few jobs, freelance work, having kids and working - you already have the skills you need to manage your time and work. For me, I write everything down, everything that needs doing/reading/actions from meetings - and I give everything a deadline and I make sure I meet those deadlines. That way I know everything will get done and it eases my anxiety. I also think it is important to block out the noise - there are tonnes of events, conferences, seminars, reading groups, training etc - be selective. If you have other commitments, just stick to what will benefit your project and try not to feel guilty or that you are missing out, you can't do everything. Ultimately for me, I just chip away a little everyday and some days this is more than others. I spent a lot of evenings working because my child is asleep, and I often use weekends when my partner takes our child out for the day. I take advantage of slow mornings in front of the telly and nap times! I really enjoy a few days every month where I don't think or touch my research - a weekend away at the beach, a weekend spent in the garden. I think its important to have this time where you are not on your laptop.

Amy

- Time management is something that affects the whole PhD journey, especially for part-time students balancing work, family, and study. From the first year, it's important to build good habits around organising your time and keeping track of tasks.
- Over time, I moved from paper notes to digital systems that sync across my phone and computer, which made a huge difference to my productivity and helped me protect my most focused time for research.
- I would strongly recommend learning how to use time-management tools early on – things like calendars, task systems, scheduling meetings automatically, and prioritising urgent work. Planning your days, weeks, and even months ahead can really reduce stress and help you stay consistent.
- At the same time, it's important to leave space for rest and personal life as well. A PhD is a long journey, and if the pressure becomes too overwhelming, it's difficult to sustain yourself in the long run.

Luman

Treat the PhD like a job; work roughly 9-5 Monday to Friday where possible, then properly rest afterwards. Take breaks seriously. Try to go outside every week, even just for a walk or hike, and don't isolate yourself indoors all the time. Staying connected with people, sleeping properly, and making time for family and health are all essential for long-term sustainability.

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ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

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Category: Postgraduate research



From Corporate to Campus: the transition to PhD

by Student Ambassador Team | Apr 17, 2025

Anuradha discusses the change between corporate life in HR and the day-to-day of PhD research at The University of Manchester.



Rahul's Research: Forecasting Indian Migratory Behaviour (PhD Social Statistics)

by Student Ambassador Team | Apr 3, 2025

Rahul discusses his journey to Manchester and his Social Statistics research on migration and quantitative methods in the Cathie Marsh

research institute.



Staying Motivated – Pushing Through PhD Fatigue

by Student Ambassador Team | Mar 24, 2025

Our PhD ambassadors in Humanities share their experiences of PhD fatigue and how to avoid the dreaded burnout of postgraduate research.



Manchester Voices Podcast PGR Special



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The Humanities Postgraduate Research Blog
<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/humanities-blog/category/postgraduate-research/>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1hV992mWz8ptNjiYcQlqrS>

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THANK YOU

We look forward to welcoming you to The University of Manchester soon.

