



Recruiting our researchers

Your organisation may already employ staff who have a first degree (BA or BSc) from Sheffield or another UK university. There are also benefits to employing those who have continued in education beyond first degree level in order to obtain a higher degree by carrying out independent research.

About our researchers

At Sheffield, our 'early career researchers' fall into two broad categories. First, there are those who are still working towards a higher degree. These are known as 'postgraduate researchers' (PGRs). Secondly, there are 'contract research staff' who have obtained a higher degree within the last ten years and are now working on externally funded research projects in University departments.

Post graduate researchers (PhDs)

The great majority of PGRs at Sheffield are working towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). To obtain a PhD a candidate is expected to investigate a specific topic in depth with a view to making an original contribution to knowledge. PhD candidates are usually registered for three to four years full time and six to seven years part time.

At the end of this period they are expected to present their research findings in the form of a thesis which will typically be between 30,000 - 80,000 words in length. As well as working on their research project PhD candidates at Sheffield follow a programme of study (the Doctoral Development Programme) which includes personal and professional development activities alongside training in research skills.

In addition to those working towards a PhD we have a smaller number of PGRs aiming for master's degrees by research and for specialist doctorates in medicine and dentistry.

Contract research staff

The University employs over 900 people who are classed as 'contract research staff'. These are mainly people who have completed doctoral studies and who are now working as members of research teams in academic departments. The great majority of research staff are employed on fixed-term contracts lasting for anything from six months to five years.

A number of staff see employment in this kind of post as a step towards a permanent academic career but increasingly researchers are keen to use both their specialist knowledge and their wider personal skills in employment outside academia.

What do our researchers have to offer employers?

Many of our researchers are leading experts in their chosen field, and their specialist knowledge could be of great help to you if you are seeking to develop new products or services, enhance quality and productivity or identify new markets. However, as well as possessing this kind of knowledge researchers, regardless of the field in which they are working, have a wide range of transferable skills which they have acquired as a result of being involved in research. Some of the main ones are:

- **Analytical and problem-solving ability** - research is all about identifying problems and their causes, thinking creatively about possible solutions and testing those solutions to see which ones work.
- **Verbal communication skills** - researchers have to present and justify their findings to critical audiences made up of other experts in their field; there may also be occasions when they have to explain their work to audiences of non-specialists.

- **Written communication skills** - all researchers are expected to communicate their findings to the outside world through academic papers and journal articles and, again, these are subject to critical scrutiny by other researchers before being published.
- **Time management** - whether they are working towards a PhD or employed on a research project which has fixed-term funding, researchers are always under pressure to meet deadlines; moreover, the time they spend on research often has to be balanced against teaching and administrative commitments.
- **Flexibility and adaptability** - research rarely goes exactly according to plan and there will always be occasions when an individual researcher has to go back to the beginning and think of ways of overcoming obstacles. Researchers also receive a great deal of critical feedback on their work and have to learn to modify their own thinking in the light of this criticism.
- **Project management skills** - in order to complete a research project successfully, researchers need to be able to plan, prioritise, set goals and review progress systematically.
- **Team working ability** - contrary to the popular image research, especially in the sciences, is very much a collective activity and very often researchers collaborate actively with colleagues based in industry, other UK universities and, in some cases, institutions outside the UK.
- **Motivation and self-direction** - researchers are used to working without direct supervision and successful completion of a research project requires a high degree of patience and determination.
- **Interpersonal skills** - research isn't only about carrying out experiments in the laboratory: in the social and health sciences it often involves interviewing people in a skilled way in order to obtain information.

