



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STUDIES

APPENDIX TO THE MPhil/PHD DEGREE STUDENT HANDBOOK 2024/25

This appendix should be read in conjunction with the [core MPhil/PhD student handbook](#)

The Department of Health Studies sits within the School of Life Sciences and the Environment, which covers the following disciplines: Biological Sciences, Earth Sciences, Health Studies, Geography and Psychology. The Department of Health Studies does not currently have a department building as the building that will be our permanent home (Chestnuts, to the north of the A30, behind the Packhouse public house) is being refurbished; however, the staff offices are located in the Beatrice Shilling Building and, as a PhD student, you will be able to access the formal and informal staff spaces on the 2nd Floor of Shilling Building using your Student ID card. You will have access to a desk and desktop computer in the Shilling office space, where you will be able to conduct your work on campus.

Welcome to the School of Life Sciences and the Environment

As Director of PGR Education, I am delighted to welcome you to the School of Life Sciences and the Environment. The School, which was launched on 1 August 2019 is one of the largest and most diverse in the University; our vibrant research culture spans the arts and humanities and social and natural sciences. The School – which brings together Biological Sciences, Earth Sciences, Health Studies, Geography and Psychology – is designed to encourage world-leading research that spans disciplinary boundaries and addresses some of the most significant planetary challenges we face.

Postgraduate research students are central to the vitality of the School's research culture and I hope that you will find here a stimulating and supportive environment in which to pursue your studies. In the coming days you will meet the supervisory team who will offer you day-to-day guidance during your research project. You will also be introduced to the subject-specialist research groups and centres that exist at departmental level to support the wider community of researchers working in particular fields or disciplinary areas.

You will find support in your studies not only from your immediate supervisory team but also from the PGR Lead in your home department – Dr Anne Majumdar in Health Studies – and from the Doctoral School. We are here to help, so please do not hesitate to ask questions or to seek advice, particularly as you settle into your studies.

Dr Rebecca Fisher, Director of PGR Education for the School of Life Sciences and the Environment.

Welcome to the Department of Health Studies

Welcome to the Department of Health Studies! We are Royal Holloway's newest department – we welcomed our first student intake in September 2022 and you are amongst the first cohort of postgraduate research students to enrol in (and, in a few years, graduate from!) the Department. We hope you will enjoy your time here as part of our community.

This appendix provides you with a brief overview of the department's research environment. It should be read in conjunction with the main Research Degree Student Handbook, the Code of practice for research degree students and supervisors, and the Research Degree Regulations, all of which can be found on the [Attendance and Academic Regulations section of the Student Intranet](#), as a guide to resources and procedures.

If you have any questions about administrative or processual matters, please contact the [Doctoral School](#), Dr Rebecca Fisher (R.E.Fisher@rhul.ac.uk), the Director of PGR Education for the School of Life Sciences and the Environment. If you have questions about the department and how it supports PGR students, contact Dr Anne Majumdar, the Health Studies PGR Lead (Anne.Majumdar@rhul.ac.uk). Important announcements and information about events relevant to postgraduate students will be circulated via the department's PhD mailing list. Incoming mail for you will be placed in and in-tray by the photocopier on Shilling Floor 2, or on your assigned desk if you have one.

To help us contact you please keep your address up to date via Campus Connect and check your University e-mail account frequently as e-mail is our primary way of circulating information and getting in touch with you.

Dr Anne Majumdar, PGR Lead for the Department of Health Studies

Key contacts

Role	Name	Email	Phone	Room
Executive Dean	Professor Klaus Dodds	K.Dodds@rhul.ac.uk	01784 443580	Queens 122
Head of Department	Professor Alexandra Palombi	Alexandra.Palombi@rhul.ac.uk	01784 414216	Shilling 2 nd Floor
School Director of PGR Education	Dr Rebecca Fisher	R.E.Fisher@rhul.ac.uk	01784 443628	QB244
Department PGR Lead	Dr Anne Majumdar	Anne.Majumdar@rhul.ac.uk		Shilling 2 nd Floor
School helpdesk*		LSE-School@rhul.ac.uk	01784 276884	Wolfson 118

* For the majority of your non-academic related issues, please contact the Doctoral School. However, for queries about teaching contracts, expenses and study space within the school, please contact the School of Life Sciences and the Environment helpdesk.

Staff

Staff profiles for the academic, administrative and support staff in the Department of Health Studies can be found on [PURE](#). Here, you will find names and contact details for each member of staff, an overview of their main research interests, papers they have published, past projects they have worked on ongoing projects they are currently working on. You are welcome to contact any staff – in your department or any other department – to discuss research interests throughout your studies.

[List of staff in the Department of Health Studies](#)

Research areas

You can see the ongoing research projects within the Department of Health Studies [here](#), and read recently published academic papers by members of the Department of Health Studies [here](#)

The research in the department is focussed on the activity of three key research groups:

Global and Planetary Health

Health research in the Department takes a global outlook, considering health systems across the world and the health of humans, animals, plants and the total environment. Staff within the Global and Planetary Health group come from diverse disciplines including Public Health, Occupational Therapy, Biological Anthropology, Veterinary Science, Health Economics, Education and Computer Science; they have worked in academia, policy research, publishing and clinical practice in the UK and overseas – and carry out research in India, Nepal, Turkey, Kenya, Cambodia and many other countries. Planetary Health – the idea that people cannot be healthy if the environment they live in is unhealthy – underpins the ethos of our Global and Planetary Health research. We have strong links with the [Planetary Health Alliance](#), a global network of more than 350 universities, research institutes and NGOs; with [CABI OneHealth](#); with local community action groups and with international universities including the University of Eldoret in Kenya and Atatürk University in Turkey, with whom we have ongoing research projects. Our staff work with colleagues in the Departments of Geography, Psychology, Earth Sciences, Biological Sciences, Business and Management, Political and International Relations and Social Care.

Sustainable Agricultural Systems

We aim to provide novel interdisciplinary solutions to global sustainability challenges. Ensuring that food is produced sustainably for all is one of the key challenges we face. Agriculture is currently one of the largest contributors to anthropogenic climate change and is associated with other negative environmental impacts. In the future, food must be produced more sustainably, increasing the human health benefits and reducing the health disbenefits of our food production systems (e.g. air/soil/water pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change). To achieve this, interdisciplinary solutions are needed, spanning social, scientific, economic and health research. Staff in the Sustainable Agricultural Systems group cover a range of disciplines, including Agronomy, Agroecology, Climate Change, Conservation, Ecosystems, Food Security, Statistical modelling, Pests and Pollinators, Soil Science and Urban Agriculture. Our growing research network includes the Crown Estate, DEFRA, Dept for Energy Security and Net Zero, Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), Forest Research, RBG Kew, Sustain, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, ICC Waste Management Malawi, Wet Woodland Network and many other NGO, commercial and academic partners. We also work with RHUL colleagues in the Food Research group and Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Behaviour.

Preventative Chronic health and Human Wellbeing

Health and social care research is a primary focus of researcher in the department who explore Integrative and lifestyle management approaches for enhancing mental, physical and biopsychosocial wellbeing and for the prevention and management of chronic disease. Addressing under-researched interventions and approaches for health concerns such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and poor mental health are prioritised. Studies investigate areas including nutritional approaches, physical activity, psychological therapies, self-care, public health and health promotion strategies. The overall premise is that facilitating lifestyle behaviour change, enhancing self-care, and overcoming wider biopsychosocial obstacles such as social and environmental barriers can have a profound impact on health and wellbeing. These factors are some of the key determinants in the development of chronic disease, and allowing for effective management with a preventative focus can have far-reaching effects on an individual's health. Wider determinants of health such as health inequalities, and the health of ethnic minorities are also explored. The department has links to NHS England, and NHS Primary care networks locally, and medical and public health teams abroad such as Malaysia, India, and Northern Cyprus.

Staff-Student Action Meeting

The School of Life Sciences and the Environment is keen to hear the views of its postgraduate students through a School-level Staff-Student Action Meeting. It is anticipated that meetings will be held termly, beginning in the autumn.

Postgraduate representatives from the School's five departments will be appointed in Term 1 of each academic year and the Students' Union will also provide representatives with appropriate training and support in order to allow them to undertake their roles effectively.

The Meeting is an important forum in which issues that concern postgraduate students particularly can be aired and in which solutions can be discussed and identified. It is a great way to gain experience discussing academic issues with staff and is an opportunity for leadership in the School.

Facilities and resources

Laboratory and Greenhouse Space:

As the Department of Health Studies is currently waiting for our permanent home to be refurbished, we have no laboratory spaces of our own. However, lab-based studies are a possibility and exist in collaboration with departments such as Neuroscience, Earth Sciences, Geography and Biomedical sciences. There is also a research greenhouse and polytunnel which is available to all. If you need to use laboratory or greenhouse facilities, please discuss this with your supervisor(s) as early as possible, including any training you will require on the use of facilities.

Omnidrone

The University has recently built a state-of-the-art robotics and drone research and innovation centre, called Omnidrone, which is based on campus (behind car park 4). These facilities and associated hardware are available for all to use. We have access to a range of ground robots, submersibles and drones. For more information contact Mark Lee (mark.lee@rhul.ac.uk) or for technical information contact Darren Hurley-Smith (Darren.Hurley-Smith@rhul.ac.uk).

Photocopying and printing

There is a photocopier available at the far end of the 2nd floor Shilling Office. Please request your photocopying code from lse-school@rhul.ac.uk.

All full-time PhD students are eligible for printing credit in each academic year and part-time or joint-department students are eligible on a pro rata basis. This credit is only for use in the department and cannot be transferred to another student account. If the credit is used up before the end of the academic year students can pay to top it up. Any remaining balance from the top up can be transferred to the next academic year. The credit is applied to all accounts in September at the beginning of the academic year.

Common room

There is no dedicated common room for Health Studies students until the new building is refurbished but students are welcome to use the informal sofas and seating areas on the 2nd floor of the Beatrice Shilling Building for socialising and relaxing.

Annual reviews and upgrade

Although you will meet with your supervisor regularly during the academic year, your academic progress is formally reviewed at least once every twelve months, regardless of whether you are studying full or part time.

- [Core annual review details](#)
- [Annual reviews in the Department of Health Studies](#)

All MPhil / PhD students start their programme on the MPhil and have to pass the upgrade review meeting in order to be eligible to submit for the PhD.

- [Core upgrade details](#)
- [Upgrades in the Department of Health Studies](#)