

PHD APPLICATION SERVICE

ELEMENT ONE



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UNIVERSITY RECOMMENDATION REPORT

A list of 5 recommended universities, categorized by criteria such as academic reputation, location and funding support.

Having considered all your requirements and ambitions, we recommend you apply to the University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, University of Warwick, King's College London and/or SOAS, University of London. We recommend applying to more than one university to increase your chances of success.

DPhil English, University of Oxford

Academic Reputation: The University of Oxford does not offer a PhD English programme, but their DPhil in English programme is equivalent and is an exceptional doctoral offering with unparalleled academic reputation. The University is at the top of the Complete University League Tables (2026) and is globally recognised for excellence in literary studies, making it an ideal choice for doctoral study.

Location: The university is located within a beautiful historic city that is well connected to the rest of the UK and easily accessible from London. Specific advantages of the location include access to the Bodleian Libraries, the largest library service in the UK with more than 13 million printed items, plus the upcoming state-of-the-art Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, which opens in 2025. The University of Oxford's collegiate system provides additional resources and networking opportunities for students.

Programme: The DPhil programme typically takes 3-4 years to complete and involves supervised research that leads to you writing a thesis of 80,000-100,000 words. The first year includes structured training and the development of your research proposal, which is then developed over the following years with the support of one or more supervisors. During the programme, you would be offered additional research training and support as needed.

Research Environment: The DPhil programme offers a wide range of research seminars, events and a visiting speaker series and has a strong graduate community through the English Graduates at Oxford (EGO) network, which offers an intellectually stimulating environment for doctoral students.

Funding: Funding is available through college-specific opportunities (for example, a Clarendon scholarship, the Ertegun Graduate Scholarship Programme or an Oxford-Wolfson-Marriott Graduate Scholarship, which all provide support through fee payment and a bursary for three years). Candidates are automatically considered for most Oxford scholarships upon application if they note that they are looking for funding. You can also apply for funding through the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Programme.

PhD English, University of Cambridge

Academic Reputation: Cambridge consistently ranks among the world's top universities for English literature and the Faculty of English has an excellent reputation in postcolonial and feminist literary criticism with many academics researching in this field. It is the home of *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*.

Location: The university is located in a city and has excellent links to the rest of the UK, with easy access to London. It offers access to the high-quality facilities of the Cambridge University Library and numerous college libraries, which are all accessible to a PhD student.

Programme: The university offers a three-year PhD English programme with comprehensive supervision and structured doctoral training opportunities. There is a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches to research, which would suit your research interests.

Research Environment: There is an active postcolonial studies community at the university, which hosts regular seminars and conferences. The university's strength in contemporary literature would provide excellent context for your research.

Funding: Various college-specific awards are available, such as the Judith E Wilson Studentship (£30,000), which is offered for funding towards a PhD for the purpose of furthering the study of literature. All prospective PhD candidates will be considered for such funding if they indicate that they are looking for funding on their application form. You can also apply for funding through the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Programme.

PhD English, University of Warwick

Academic Reputation: Warwick's English department is internationally recognised for both postcolonial studies and contemporary literature and has an excellent reputation. In the Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey 2023, the university outperformed the average for the UK Russell Group of research-intensive universities in every area but one (supervision, resources, research culture, community, progression, responsibilities, support and professional development) and equalled that average in the remaining area (research skills). Your familiarity with the institution would be an advantage in your application.

Location: This is a campus university with excellent facilities. The university has strong connections to London while maintaining a focused academic environment.

Programme Structure: The PhD English programme has a flexible structure, allowing interdisciplinary work. There is a strong culture of support for early-career researchers and many supervisors with a good reputation.

Research Environment: The university's good reputation in postcolonial studies makes it an ideal base for your research. The department has recently hosted significant conferences on world literature.

Funding Support: The university has a good track record for AHRC funding through the AHRC Midlands 4 Cities (M4C) Doctoral Training Programme, but there is no internal funding that meets your requirements.

PhD English, King's College London

Academic Reputation: King's College London has an excellent reputation for comparative and world literature and a strong focus on contemporary and postcolonial writing, with many academics who are widely published in this field.

Location: The central London location provides access to the British Library, national archives and cultural events. London has a vibrant and active literary and academic community that you could be a part of if you studied here.

Programme Structure: The university offers a research-intensive programme with good pastoral support and an excellent range of possible supervisors. There are opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration through internal initiatives.

Research Environment: There is an active research culture and the department hosts regular seminars in postcolonial and contemporary literature.

Funding: The London Arts and Humanities Partnership is an AHRC-funded doctoral training partnership available to candidates which supports doctoral studies in arts and humanities. The Harold Moody PGR Studentship, which supports underrepresented communities within postgraduate research students in arts and humanities, and the Open Competition, which enables students to propose their own research project for funding, are also available.

PhD in Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS, University of London

Academic Reputation: SOAS is a world-leading institution for postcolonial studies with expertise in non-Western literatures and cultures. Although they do not offer a specific PhD English programme, the PhD in Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies would suit your research interests. The university has a unique position and reputation in global literary studies, and there are many academics working in this field.

Location: The central London location provides access to the British Library, national archives and cultural events. London has a vibrant and active literary and academic community that you could be a part of if you studied here.

Programme Structure: This is a highly specialised programme, which would be perfect for postcolonial research with a literary focus. There is a strong emphasis on theory, which would give you a strong and broad background of wider research in the field.

Research Environment: The university has an unparalleled community of postcolonial academics with regular conferences and visiting fellowships from international scholars.

Funding: A CHASE Studentship through the CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership would offer funding for fees and living costs. A Research Studentship is also available, which offers full-time MPhil/PhD scholarships to eligible Black British students. Each scholarship provides full financial support and doctoral skill development to successful recipients for a 3-year full-time programme.

LIST OF SUPERVISORS

A report recommending one potential professor, along with their CV and profile link, for each of the 5 universities.

University of Oxford

Professor Elleke Boehmer: <https://www.english.ox.ac.uk/people/professor-elleke-boehmer>

Professor Elleke Boehmer is Professor of World Literature in English in the English Faculty, University of Oxford. She is a founding figure in the field of postcolonial studies, and her research focuses on fiction. Boehmer's research explores issues of migration, identity, reception, nation, race and gender representation; and world literature and postcolonial debates, particularly relating to sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and contemporary Britain.

University of Cambridge

Professor Priyamvada Gopal: <https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/people/Priyamvada.Gopal/>

Professor Priyamvada Gopal is Professor of Postcolonial Studies at the Faculty of English, University of Cambridge and Professorial Fellow, Churchill College. Her present interests are in the literatures, politics, and cultures of empire, colonialism and decolonisation. She has related interests in the novel, South Asian literature and postcolonial cultures. She is currently on research leave but is still taking on new PhD students.

University of Warwick

Professor Rashmi Varma: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/people/varmadrrashmi/>

Professor Rashmi Varma's areas of research include the postcolonial city, postcolonial Indian and African theory, literature and culture, feminism in a global context, representations of indigeneity in postcolonial India and the theory of world literature.

Kings College London

Dr Anna Bernard: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/anna-bernard>

Dr Anna Bernard is a Reader in Comparative Literature and English. Her research includes world literature in English, Spanish, Arabic and Hebrew as well as postcolonial literature. She welcomes PhD supervision enquiries from students interested in anti-colonial and third-worldist literature and culture, literature and transnational movements and cultural activism and advocacy.

SOAS, University of London

Professor Rachel W Harrison: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/rachel-harrison>

Professor Rachel W Harrison is an expert in cultural studies, cinema, modern literature, postcolonial and gender studies with reference to Thailand and more widely to mainland South East Asia; medical humanities and public engagement with reference to Northeast Thailand (Isan) and Lao PDR; literary criticism and South East Asian Literatures in a comparative context; perceptions of cultural difference, Orientalism and Otherness.