



Brunel
University
of London

Brunel / Ahlia

PhD without residence

Programme Handbook

Member of the federation



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

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Foreword

Our partnership with Brunel University of London began with what is known as the 'two plus two' programme involving a single academic School at Brunel.

This humble beginning soon led Ahlia and Brunel to launch the PhD without residence in 2007. The PhD without residence was an instant success, as it met the aspirations of many young men and women in the GCC region, who were looking to cultivate and develop the necessary skills towards conducting high quality research.

The PhD without residence is a great opportunity offered locally by a highly reputable and an international institution. More than fifteen years since its inception, today, the programme is well recognised in the region.

The programme, in both pathways, is accredited by the Higher Education Council in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The PhD without residence has produced over 75 graduates in many fields of study who contributed to the local economy.

The graduates include University Presidents, VPs, Deans, and senior consultants. Ahlia, in affiliation with Brunel, has made important strides in the area of research through this programme in this region. Our rationale for the PhD without residence is simple:

Brunel is a well-established, research-led university with an international reputation whereas Ahlia is a young, visionary institution with research being an integral part of our policy and philosophy.

One of the main benefits of the PhD without residence is of course that it offers someone who is unable to travel the chance of researching and attaining a PhD in Bahrain.

The benefits for Bahrain and the Middle East as a whole go wider. In my opinion, we have not been very good at addressing some of the problems we face in the Middle East and I believe university research can definitely make a contribution.

We are therefore delighted to be working alongside such a well-known research-led university, and we consider our partnership to be an excellent example of genuine partnership between the Middle East and the West which will directly serve the interests of our region.

I am confident that the programme will expand and we will be able to offer PhDs in other areas of research.

Prof. Abdulla Al Hawaj

Founding President
Ahlia University





Welcome from Brunel Pro Vice-Chancellor

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the PhD without residence programme, a distinctive collaboration between Brunel University of London and Ahlia University.

This partnership enables students across the Gulf region to pursue a British doctoral degree while remaining rooted in Bahrain, benefitting from supervision, training, and academic guidance provided by Brunel's distinguished faculty.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting many of our doctoral students and alumni, both in Bahrain and in the United Kingdom. Their achievements are a testament to the life-changing impact of this programme—empowering individuals to advance knowledge, transform their careers, and make meaningful contributions to their communities and industries.

Since receiving its Royal Charter in 1966, Brunel University has been dedicated to technological education, innovation, and practical research that addresses global challenges. Now a proud member of the University of London federation, Brunel stands alongside some of the world's most prestigious institutions, reinforcing its global academic standing and strengthening the value of its degrees.

True to the pioneering spirit of our namesake, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, our mission has been to combine intellectual rigor with creativity, preparing graduates who are equipped to shape the future of their professions and societies.

Through this collaboration, we aim to nurture research that is not only academically excellent but also relevant, impactful, and socially responsible. The Brunel PhD at Ahlia stands as a model of international academic cooperation—one that combines British research excellence with Bahrain's dynamic academic environment.

I invite you to embark on this rewarding journey of discovery and innovation, and to contribute to the shared success of both Brunel University and Ahlia University through your research, dedication, and scholarly achievements.

Prof. Trevor Hoey

Pro Vice-Chancellor
International and Sustainability
Brunel University of London





Message from Ahlia/Brunel PhD Coordinator

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Brunel University of London PhD (Without Residence) Programme.

This distinguished doctoral programme represents a pioneering academic vision that has shaped the landscape of higher education in Bahrain and the region for nearly two decades.

Today, you join a remarkable community of scholars and thought leaders who continue to advance knowledge, innovation, and impact across diverse fields and industries. This collaboration, between Ahlia University and Brunel University of London, has served as a testament to innovation in transnational (higher) education. This groundbreaking first of its kind model enabled aspiring scholars to pursue a prestigious British doctoral degree while remaining embedded in their professional and socio-economic context in Bahrain and the region.

The PhD (WR) has since become a catalyst for academic innovation, research excellence, and knowledge exchange. It has served as the fulcrum for joint conferences, collaborative research endeavours, student mobility, and the cultivation of a vibrant, global academic community.

As Programme Coordinator—and as a proud graduate and product of this transformative programme—I can attest personally to the profound journey you are about to embark on.

This programme does not merely confer a degree; it shapes character, sharpens intellect, and enables scholars to emerge as leaders, change agents, and productive contributors to society.

It demands commitment, intellectual curiosity, and resilience—but it also offers mentorship, inspiration, and a supportive cross-border research community that celebrates your successes and walks beside you through challenges.

We wish you every success in your doctoral journey and look forward to witnessing your transformation as scholars and leaders. Welcome to a programme with a proud legacy—and to a future of possibility, discovery, and impact.

Dr. Ammar Al Hawaj
Programme Coordinator



Our History



In 2016, Brunel celebrated 50 years as a university. However, our history can be traced back much further to 1798 through our predecessor colleges of Borough Road College, Maria Grey College, Shoreditch College and the West London Institute of Higher Education and as well as through Acton Technical College then Brunel College.

Our rise since 1966 has been impressive and our reputation grows year on year. Brunel is named after the 19th century engineering genius, Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Today, Brunel is a leading international university dedicated to education and research that is relevant to the global economy.

As one of the world's most international universities, and the UK's most international university for the second year in a row (Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025), we attract renowned academics from all around the world to lead our research programmes.



Established in 2001, Ahlia University is licensed by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain under Cabinet Decision No. 03-1626. It is an autonomous university that is independently chartered, funded, and managed by the private sector.

Our founders articulated a vision of a distinctive institution of higher learning to ensure that science and technology on the one hand, and the humanities and social sciences on the other, take their rightful place in advancing the Kingdom of Bahrain in particular and the GCC in general.

Today, internationally accredited by AACSB, ABET, and EUR-ACE, among others, Ahlia University ranks among the leading universities in the Middle East and consistently features among the top universities in regional QS rankings. The University was ranked 12th best university in the Arab Region by Times Higher Education in 2026.

The Brunel/Ahlia partnership

Brunel University of London strategically partnered with Ahlia University in 2005 to offer the PhD without Residence programme in Information Systems, Computing, Mathematics, in addition to Business and Management studies.

The programme offers a unique opportunity for students in Bahrain and the region to gain a British Doctor of Philosophy degree from a world-class research-intensive university with a wealth of research experience and a tradition of academic excellence.



TOP 40

UK research-intensive university >

REF 2021

TOP 20%

for our contributions to collaborative research >

Knowledge Exchange Framework 2024

72.7%

of our research is world leading or internationally excellent >

REF 2021

Our expertise in Computing

Research in Computer Science at Brunel is internationally recognised, ranked 5th in the UK in the Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities and 1st in the UK for H-index (source NTU 2018).

We have particular strengths in research into computing methodologies (Intelligent data analysis, artificial intelligence, simulation and modelling), software engineering, human-centred computing (HCI and interactive multimedia systems) and digital economy (including IoT, trust, privacy and cybersecurity).

Our research delivers creative computing solutions to industrial and societal challenges, with applications including healthcare, overseas development, education, ecology, finance and manufacturing.

Learn more about research in this area



Our expertise in Business Management

Research activities within the Business School at Brunel cover a wide-ranging and diverse field of topics from accounting, through HR, to strategy.

Academic staff involved within these programmes investigate corporate governance and social responsibility, employment relations, information systems, corporate brands, marketplace cultures, international business and entrepreneurship and much more.

Our research drives forward global business and societal transformation and is applied to many areas, such as :

NASA's mission to Mars, humanitarian relief in Iran, biobank network across Europe, British Monarchy brand in the UK, to innovating the public sector in Saudi Arabia.

Learn more about research in this area



Programme Overview

The PhD without residence programme is offered as full-time study mode degree, which entails study for around 44 weeks each year, during which time you will be expected to carry out research work that leads to a full thesis. You will be supervised by at least two members of academic staff with whom you will be expected to meet with regularly.

Each year you must produce a formal report of your progress to discuss with your supervisors and other academic staff. At the end of your research journey, you will present a thesis for examination.

Autumn and spring schools

There are two yearly skills training schools held at Ahlia University by Academic and Professional staff from Brunel University.

Each school will normally run over three (3) days. The autumn school will normally be conducted during the month of November, whereas the spring school will normally run in the month of April.

Attendance is compulsory for all PhD candidates and the sessions are designed to ensure researchers are fully trained (e.g. in research techniques, literature review skills, methods of statistical analysis and writing skills).

Symposium

This annual conference held in Bahrain, will normally be conducted over a two (2) day period, between the two schools.

At the symposium, researchers are given the opportunity to present their work in a form of a conference presentation accompanied by an academic article that would later be submitted for publication.

PGR student experience committee

Students are given the opportunity to voice their concerns and ideas via a committee which is dedicated to support the students and cater for your needs. Members of the committee will include student representatives that you elect on an annual basis, with one (1) representative for each level.

Main benefits

- ▶ Unrivalled opportunity of a PhD from a prestigious UK university, right here in Bahrain
- ▶ Access to Brunel University's extensive digital library and the University of London's information resources
- ▶ Full support and excellent facilities provided by Ahlia University Bahrain
- ▶ Exceptional chance to work alongside top computing, business and management researchers

Your thesis

In your thesis, you must meet the criteria set out in Senate Regulation 5 and the Quality Assurance Agency's National Qualification Framework. You must also satisfy university regulations and show a sound knowledge and critical appreciation of your discipline.

The thesis submitted for the award of PhD must include the creation and interpretation of new knowledge in that discipline.

It may take the form of a wholly written dissertation or one that comprises original, creative work supported by a written commentary indicating how the creative work contributes towards the requirements for the award.

You must complete the major part of your thesis during your period of registration with the university, under supervision arrangements approved by the university.

You will present your thesis at a viva voce examination. A candidate may present a less substantial piece of work for the award of an MPhil.

Successfully completing your PhD

The key requirements for obtaining a PhD are:

- ▶ Creation and interpretation of new knowledge - which should be of a standard sufficient for publication in peer reviewed academic journals;
- ▶ A broad and in depth understanding of your field including relevant methodologies, an ability to critically discuss research, research methods, their implications and limitations;
- ▶ The preparation of a well written thesis providing a critical analysis of your work, the methods used, observations made, critical discussion in the context of the broader field, and your original contribution to knowledge.



Your Research Journey

The PhD without residence programme represents a unique opportunity for anyone who is unable to spend three years abroad - whether due to work or family commitments - to be awarded a PhD by a UK university with an international reputation.

You can choose from a wide range of research topics - research interests of academic staff span all the main areas of business and management, economics, finance, information systems and computer science research.

How does it work?

- ▶ You will be registered at Brunel University of London, with your learning based at Ahlia University
- ▶ You will have full access to both Ahlia University and Brunel University's facilities and extensive libraries
- ▶ You will be assigned two academic supervisors who will support and guide you over the course of your PhD: Your principal supervisor will be based at Brunel University of London and the local supervisor will be based at Ahlia University
- ▶ You will receive doctoral research training through research focused seminars and workshops delivered by Brunel flying faculty
- ▶ You will also be encouraged to attend conferences and disseminate your research.
- ▶ You will present your research at regular progress review sessions and at the annual Doctoral Research Symposium
- ▶ You are strongly encouraged to visit Brunel whenever possible throughout your studies; your viva voce will take place at Brunel University of London.

Support from your supervisors

To support you in your research, your Ahlia supervisor will be on hand for regular face-to-face meetings and you will have regular contact with your Brunel supervisor by email, MS Teams or telephone.

Your supervisor might also visit Bahrain within the context of the Autumn or Spring schools, or the annual doctoral symposium.

In addition, your supervisory team will normally include a Research Development Advisor who will assist you in determining appropriate research and professional development training opportunities.

It is essential to the success of postgraduate researchers that they establish good working relationships with the supervisory team and that this relationship encompasses personal wellbeing as well as their academic progress and professional development.

To encourage critical analysis and independence of thought, staff from Brunel University regularly organise and deliver innovative research-focused workshops and seminars. All of these take place at Ahlia University.

Whilst students may take the opportunity to visit Brunel University and meet their supervisor face-to-face, this is not strictly necessary.

The only time you are required to come to Brunel is for your viva defence, once you have submitted your thesis.

How your engagement with training is monitored

Your engagement with training is monitored formally at least once a year as part of your progression review (e.g. 9 or 18 month review; annual review).

Failure to engage appropriately with required training may mean that your review panel decide that you should not progress with your research degree.

Progression reviews

Ongoing monitoring of progress is essential to ensure appropriate levels of support and timely submission throughout your period of registration. The schedule of monitoring aims to create a balance between supportive, developmental review and more formal progression steps.

Section 11 of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees provides all detail to postgraduate researchers on progression reviews.

Further progression review details are contained in the table below.

Table 1: Progression for Doctoral Awards

MoA / When	Who	Purpose	Documentation (uploaded to eVision)
1 month (4 weeks from actual date of registration)	Supervisory Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet Principal Supervisor, 2nd Supervisor, RDA and Industrial Advisor/External Supervisor, if appointed Ensure postgraduate researcher is engaging with their studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research (Project) Plan (up to 2,000 words) 3D Researcher Development Plan Induction Checklist
9 months	Progression Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal check of progress Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress report Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan Substantive written work (as defined by the College) Evidence of completing the Research Integrity online course Evidence of completing College/Department research methods training
20 months	Progression Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal check of both progress and plan to meet expected submission date. Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress Report Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan Thesis Plan Draft thesis chapter(s) or equivalent report
30 months	Progression Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal check of both Panel progress and plan to meet expected submission date. Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress Report Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan Thesis Plan Draft thesis chapter(s) or equivalent report
36 months	EXPECTED SUBMISSION		

Progression reviews are managed via the University's eVision system, and you must use eVision to download and upload all relevant documentation.

The 4-week review, as an example, gives you a chance to meet your full supervisory team, talk through your research plans and discuss your development needs.

Your supervisory team will be keen to see that you have settled in and are engaging with your studies. They should also be able to help you with any concerns or issues you have experienced in acclimatising to

your department. The 4-week review represents a formal progression step so you must engage with it in order to progress with your degree.

Table 2: Minimum and maximum period of registration, and expected submission dates

Degree and Mode	Minimum period of registration (months)	Expected Submission Date (months)	Maximum period of registration (months)
Full-Time			
PhD	24	36	48

Responsibilities of postgraduate researchers

PhD researchers need to be aware of their responsibilities whilst registered at the University.

These include:

- Taking active responsibility for your own personal and professional development
- Maintaining (a joint responsibility with supervisory teams) regular contact with supervisors
- Engaging fully with progression and annual reviews
- Setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work and maintaining satisfactory progress with your research
- Making supervisors aware of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect the progress of your work
- Attending the mandatory autumn and spring schools, and presenting on a submitted piece of work as part of the annual doctoral symposium
- Attending any other development opportunities (research-related and other) and training that have been identified within the context of your supervisory meetings and progression/annual reviews Adhering to the University's regulations, policies and guidance.



Key Features, Facilities and Support Services

Key features

- One of the oldest running and most established transnational education (TNE) models at the doctoral level in the GCC region - offered since 2007.
- Offered in dual pathways: Management and Information Technology and Computing
- Three years full-time research programme, with no taught credit-bearing courses or written exams.
- Flexible learning modality which offers both face-to-face and online supervision meetings, combined with flying faculty who deliver research focused seminars and workshops in Bahrain.
- British Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, awarded by Brunel University of London.
- Accredited by the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Bahrain.
- Placed on the Bahrain National Qualifications Framework at level 10

Excellent research support and training

The Graduate School provides a range of personal, professional and career development opportunities.

This includes workshops, online training, coaching and events, to enable you to enhance your professional profile, refine your skills, and plan your next career steps as part of the Researcher Development Programme.

The researcher development programme (RDP) offers workshops and seminars in a range of areas including progression, research management, research dissemination, and careers and personal development.

You will also be offered a number of online, self-study courses on BBL, including Research Integrity, Research Skills Toolkit, Research Methods in Literature Review and Principles of Research Methods.

Library services

Brunel's Library is open 24 hours a day, has 400,000 books and 250,000 ebooks, and an annual budget of almost £2m. Subject information specialists train students in the latest technology, digital literacy, and digital dissemination of scholarly outputs.

As well as the physical resources available in the Library, we also provide access to a wealth of electronic resources. These include databases, journals and e-books. Access to these resources has been bought by the Library through subscription and is limited to current staff and students.

Dedicated research support staff provide guidance and training on open access, research data management, copyright and other research integrity issues. The Ahlia University library provides dedicated spaces for PhD students. The library provides access to 2,500,000 e-journal articles and more than 10,000 e-books through subscription to tens of on-line databases from various publishers such as

- > EBSCO
- > IEEE Computer Society Digital Library
- > Al Manhal Academic Complete
- > OCLC
- > VIRTUS INTERPRESS
- > Academic Journals
- > RESEARCH ARCHIVE
- > Digital Public Library of America
- > Eldis, Elsevier Open Access Journals
- > Google scholar
- > JSTOR (Journal Storage)
- > Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD)
- > SpringerOpen
- > SSRN (Social Science Research Network)
- > Taylor & Francis Open Journals
- > UNESDOC Digital Library
- > Virginia Tech Electronic Library
- > Wiley Open Access
- > World Bank Publications
- > World Digital Library across disciplines taught at the University.

For a full list of available databases please visit the library webpage.

Health and safety

(Ahlia University campus)

Ahlia University is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for students, faculty, staff and visitors throughout its premises. Ahlia University maintains a professional security services to take care of campus security. Security guards are stationed at all entrance points and patrol the campus on a 24-hour basis.

The campus is secured by CCTV (closed-circuit television), which is monitored and recorded. A health and safety leaflet is distributed across the campus to raise awareness of students, faculty, staff and visitors about the various aspects concerning health and safety.

Security and access control

(Ahlia University campus)

There is restricted access to Ahlia University. Access is obtained by staff and students through the presentation of a staff or student ID card. Elevators to AU are equipped with access devices which can only be activated through passwords. Visitors are requested to present their CPR (ID) cards to security guards to gain access to the campus.

Where students have special needs, provisions have been made to allow such students to use ramps and the underground basement parking where they are provided with elevator access cards. The university takes special care to ensure students with mobility challenges have access to all the facilities that the university offers in a secure manner.

Fire safety management

(Ahlia University campus)

Fire extinguishers and hoses are located at various points on the campus with regular checking and maintenance being carried out by an outsourced approved company. Students, faculty, staff and visitors are made aware of health and safety matters such as fire escapes and extinguishers' usage through instructions using signage and posters that are placed throughout the campus.

Emergency preparedness

(Ahlia University campus)

Fire evacuation drills are conducted regularly to assess and verify the suitability and preparedness of the facilities and to educate staff, students, and visitors on how to react in case of emergencies.

The assembly point location and evacuation maps are prominently exhibited all over the campus to clarify to all students, staff and visitors where to go during an evacuation.

A university emergency team is formed to assist in helping staff, faculty, students and visitors during any emergency.

First aid kits are positioned across the campus for easy access and use in case of any need. Certified first aiders and a nurse are available on campus during usual working hours on any emergency.

Contact numbers of the first aiders are made available to students at various points on campus.

Health insurance

Ahlia University provides health insurance coverage for staff, faculty, students and visitors while they are on campus.

Emergency contacts

All students are issued with emergency contact numbers. The security staff contact numbers are posted at several key locations within the university premises and made available on the website.

A 24-hour emergency contact number is printed at the back of the student ID card which is also available on the website. It is also posted at several key locations within the university premises.

The personal contact number of the Director of Student Counselling and Guidance and the Head of Safety and Security is provided to all students for 24-hour emergency support.



Health clinic (Ahlia University campus)

A health clinic is located in the third floor and is staffed by a full-time medical doctor (MD) who is responsible for providing medical and first aid services.

During emergencies that cannot be addressed by the in-house MD, the MD will arrange for the student to be taken by ambulance to the adjacent health center or in more serious cases to the nearest hospital.

Student complaints

While the University seeks to ensure that all students have a positive experience throughout their time as students of Brunel, it is acknowledged that sometimes there are occasions where things go wrong.

For example, you may feel dissatisfied with a particular element of the University's provision. In such cases, you are encouraged to communicate any issues to the appropriate member of staff that seems best placed to deal with the matter, as most complaints can normally be resolved informally.

To the extent practicable, students should raise and deal with the issue as close as possible to the point at which it arises.

If you are not satisfied with the response, and your complaint is serious enough that it could reasonably be expected to have a material effect on your academic performance, the matter should be formally raised with the PhD (WR) office, to be dealt with initially by Ahlia in accordance with Brunel Regulations which will be applied by Ahlia.

**Dr. Sh. Mohamed
Bin Hamad Al Khalifa**
Ministry of Interior



PhD Pathway
Management
Studies

Year of Graduation
2021

Why did you choose the PhD without residence?

I chose the PhD (WR) programme because it was flexible. I could meet up with my professors in the UK, or they could meet up with me in Bahrain.

That gave me a big push to continue my research.

What research did you conduct?

My PhD thesis was on the topic of 'Crisis Management and Strategic Flexibility: The Moderating Role of Electronic Readiness of Government Authorities in the Kingdom of Bahrain'.

It explores the dimensions of crisis management and strategic flexibility, while examining electronic readiness as a moderating factor.

How did you find the learning experience?

The learning experience was amazing. I received valuable insights from my professors both in Bahrain and in the UK.

The programme was very flexible, and I was very happy with the programme.

What advice would you give to other aspiring researchers?

For new researchers, I would say enjoy the ride. It will be emotional, fruitful, but very satisfying.



Dr. Husain Abdulla
Ericsson

PhD Pathway
Information Technology
and Computing

Year of Graduation
2023

Why did you choose the PhD without residence?

I wanted to earn a PhD from one of the top universities, without the need to leave my job and country. As I searched, I found this programme, the PhD without residence, which allowed me to continue in my job as a telecom engineer at Ericsson without needing to leave my job, family and country.

What research did you conduct?

My PhD thesis focused on securing Internet of Things (IoT) devices using machine learning. In this study, I explored various machine learning algorithms and their performance in detecting anomalies in IoT devices.

How did you find the learning experience?

The PhD community of students is very supportive. The principal supervisor from Brunel, and the local supervisor from Ahlia, both help and guide you and ensure you are on the right track. I did not find much difference when I went to Brunel University in London. It was a very smooth experience to go there and apply for a student card for example. I did not find a need to be in Brunel, as studying in Ahlia University in Bahrain provides the same learning experience.

What advice would you give to other aspiring researchers?

I advise all students who have an idea, and want to pursue a PhD, to develop their research proposal. They should take advantage of this opportunity, the PhD without residence, to gain a British PhD.

**Dr. Aysha
Saqer Aljawder**



PhD Pathway
Management
Studies

Year of Graduation
2024

**Why did you choose the
PhD without residence?**

Due to the nature of my work as an interior designer, it was very difficult to leave all my projects behind and go abroad full-time.

Choosing this programme helped me achieve my dream of earning a PhD while still managing my daily responsibilities and being home with my loved ones.

What research did you conduct?

My research was on lean project management and sustainability in the construction industry. It explores the three pillars of lean management and examines its principles and sub-principles, and how tools and techniques can be applied to execute projects more efficiently.

**How did you find the learning
experience?**

The learning experience in Bahrain was extremely helpful.

The atmosphere, the help and support from everyone, including the visits from Brunel faculty in each semester. This creates a lot of opportunities for interaction, which enhances the overall experience.

**What advice would you give to other
aspiring researchers?**

I would advise others to start, and register in this programme, because it allows you to pursue higher education without leaving your daily responsibilities and loved ones.

Dr. Maryam Aldhaen
Ministry of Interior



PhD Pathway
Management
Studies

Year of Graduation
2025

**Why did you choose the
PhD without residence?**

The PhD without residence was an opportunity to get an international doctoral degree right here in Bahrain, without ignoring my work responsibilities and family as well.

What research did you conduct?

My PhD thesis was about 'Artificial Intelligence Enabled Sustainable Banking Ecosystem in the Kingdom of Bahrain'.

It focuses on the transformational potential of artificial intelligence and how it influences and effects decision-making in the banking sector in Bahrain.

**How did you find the learning
experience?**

Brunel faculty encouraged me to meet with other PhD students, and exchange experiences and talk about challenges.

Ahlia University as well provided a lot of support, from the staff and local supervisor.

**What advice would you give to other
aspiring researchers?**

Don't be afraid to make mistakes but learn from them.

Achieve your goals by taking the step to register, as this will help you develop your personality and confidence. Enjoy the journey.

Application Information and Registration Process

Entry requirements

Applicants are normally expected to hold a Master's degree in a relevant academic discipline.

Applicants who do not meet these academic requirements but who have significant occupational experience will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If English is not your first language you will be required to demonstrate an adequate level of proficiency: IELTS score of at least 6.5 with a minimum of 6.0 in all sub-sections or the equivalent TOEFL scores is normally required for most specialisations.

Please note that in order for your application to be considered, you will need to have already met the English language requirements at the time of application.

Should a candidate submit an application without having already achieved the English language entry requirement, the application will be declined automatically.

You may also opt to take the Brunel English Language Test. If you need an English test, we recommend booking one early as there can be a long wait in some areas.

Scan to book your BrunELT



Mode of study

The mode of study on offer for the PhD without residence is full-time only. You will be expected to complete your PhD in 3 years.

Assessment is based on your submitted thesis and its oral defence in a viva voce. This will normally be held at Brunel University of London in the UK and will be conducted under Brunel regulations.

Fees

Fees are reviewed annually and are subject to a small increase each year. Details of any sponsorship arrangements are required prior to enrolment. Tuition fees cover supervision, academic support, library and research services, and access to Ahlia's facilities. Accommodation, travel, and visa expenses are not included.

Fees are quoted in British Pounds Sterling and converted to Bahraini Dinars at the prevailing exchange rate. Students are invoiced by Ahlia University, and all tuition fees are payable directly to Ahlia University. Fees are payable to Ahlia University prior to enrolment in full and are subject to a capped increase each academic year.

Further details can be found on our website - Scan below.



Your research proposal

To support your application, you should include a research proposal.

This should detail the proposed area and structure of your research and should normally be in the range of 1,500-2,500 words.

Your proposal will be used to assess how consistent your research interests are with the relevant School or Department's current research activities, to judge whether the research is possible, necessary and timely and to decide whether you have the appropriate skills to carry out your proposed study.

Please describe your research area and research interests and also the rationale for your research.

You should also identify the relationship between the literature and your proposed research and discuss the importance of your research interest; is it something that is absent from the current literature or something that needs further development?

Please also provide information about your proposed methodology and specify any conceptual or technical limitations.

How to apply

Before applying for a research degree, you need to identify the research area and a potential supervisor with whom you would like to conduct your research - you can contact them informally for advice before you make your application.

The research degrees are administered by the Postgraduate Research Programmes Office in each College and they will be happy to address your enquiries before you submit your application.

When you are ready to apply you can do so using our online application system.

Please make sure you have all your personal details, academic qualifications and work experience to hand.

Scan below to download and complete the application form for international applicants, and for further details.



You will need to support your application with a detailed research proposal and two references.

Once you have completed your application form (please take particular care to ensure that your personal statement fully explains why you are interested in studying for a PhD, how a PhD will contribute to your future career plans and why you have chosen Brunel's PhD without residence programme at Ahlia University), please send it together with:

- › Your research proposal
- › Your CV
- › Authenticated copies of your academic qualifications (Master's and Bachelor's degree certificates and transcripts)
- › Proof of English Language proficiency
- › Two references, one of which must be from an academic
- › Your passport and national ID (CPR)

To:

Tel +973 1731 3524
Mobile +973 3399 7734
Email phdwr@ahlia.edu.bh

Please note you will need to apply at least 3 months prior to your preferred enrolment date.

Admission interview

Once you have finalised your research proposal, an admission interview will be organised. The main purpose of the interview is to establish:

- › Your potential to undertake original research in the proposed field of study
- › Your interest and enthusiasm for undertaking a PhD
- › Your likelihood to complete within the expected period of time
- › The statement of research interest is your own
- › That the mode of study (i.e. full-time) is appropriate
- › You are appropriately qualified and have the necessary English language skills
- › That the supervisor and Department have the requisite knowledge, skills, capacity and resources to provide the appropriate level of support and supervision

Enrolment

Postgraduate researchers must enroll on an annual basis when prompted to do so by the University.

Such enrolment must include updating, where necessary, all necessary information including addresses and contact details to ensure that records are correctly maintained.

Payment of fees

Ahlia University's policy on payment of fees (refer to the postgraduate student handbook) and Brunel University of London's Student Financial Policy outline the financial obligations of students enrolled in postgraduate programmes.

Fees are quoted in British Pounds Sterling and converted to Bahraini Dinars at the prevailing exchange rate.

Students are invoiced by Ahlia University, and all tuition fees are payable directly to Ahlia University. In line with the policies of both Ahlia and Brunel, PhD (WR) candidates are charged by full calendar months, beginning from the registration date until thesis submission or the end of the maximum registration period—whichever occurs first.

It is important to note that:

- › Fees are payable annually in advance to Ahlia University before enrolment.
- › A reduced "writing-up" fee applies from the expected submission date until the viva voce examination.
- › Students are responsible for ensuring all fees are paid, even when sponsored. Sponsors failing to pay their commitments transfer full liability to the student.
- › Fee increases (as quoted in GBP) are subject to an annual cap.
- › In the event of non-payment of university fees, you will be advised in writing of the consequences of continued non-payment. If you do not respond appropriately within the set timeframe, you will be withdrawn from the University.
- › Failure to pay tuition fees by the due dates may lead to deregistration. Access to supervision, facilities, or academic services will be withheld until the outstanding balance is cleared.
- › If you have not cleared up all outstanding payments by the time a new comes due, you will be automatically de-registered.
- › Students who are financially de-registered will not normally be reinstated within the same academic year.
- › No award, certificate, or academic transcript will be issued until all financial obligations are met.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the PhD without residence an online programme?

No – the programme is a ‘traditional’ degree, offered as part of the longstanding TNE partnership with Ahlia University. The programme utilises hybrid delivery modalities, whereby some elements (such as supervision meeting) may be delivered remotely/local-partner based, whereas other elements (such as research training workshops and the annual symposium) require in-person attendance.

2. Is the PhD without residence a different degree to the one awarded to students studying on-campus in the UK?

No – the award is the same UK doctoral degree from Brunel University of London and is identical to the one obtained by students studying on campus in London.

3. Is the degree recognised?

Yes – the programme is licensed and accredited by the higher education council of Bahrain and aligned to the Bahraini national qualifications framework at level 10.

In addition, the programme is governed by Brunel’s Senate Regulation 5 and Code of Practice, and the degree is awarded by Brunel University of London, a recognised UK awarding body.

4. Do I need a Master’s degree to apply?

A masters degree is normally required in line with Bahraini regulations, as set out by the higher education council.

Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for candidates with significant occupational experience and based on approval by the higher education council of Bahrain at the recommendation of the admissions team in Brunel.

5. Once accepted, can I defer my start date?

Yes, it is normally possible to defer the start date by a few months. These matters are regulated under Brunel’s research-degree policies (e.g., registration status, abeyance) and are subject to approval.

6. Can I transfer credits?

As a research-based degree programme with no taught component, this is not possible.

Brunel’s Senate Reg 5 and Code of Practice deal with candidature, registration and submission – they do not facilitate credit transfers in the way taught programmes do, however, transfer for students who commenced their research at another institution may be possible.

7. What if I need to take a break and pause my study period?

You may request abeyance or an extension to candidature under the Code of Practice / Senate Reg 5 if legitimate grounds exist, but this is an exception rather than standard.

8. What if I can’t pay my fees on time?

Fee payment is a requirement of registration. You must formally communicate this and liaise with the Ahlia PhD (WR) office for your case.

Based on your case, you will be advised in writing of possible payment schedules, due dates, and consequences of continued delinquency.

9. Will I be expected to publish research?

You are strongly encouraged to publish and the programme will offer numerous opportunities and avenues for doing so.

Keep in mind the doctoral degree criteria under Senate Reg 5 state that a PhD involves “creation and interpretation of new knowledge ... of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the frontier of the discipline, and merit publication.”

10. What happens if I can’t attend one of the schools?

The regulations emphasise progress reviews, supervisory meetings and attendance at required training schools/symposia; failure to adequately engage may lead to transfer to another award or withdrawal.

11. Can I visit the university in London?

Yes – while the “without residence” model is off-campus, students are welcome to visit Brunel whenever they wish throughout the course and the viva is normally held at Brunel.

12. Can I change my supervisor?

Yes – Brunel’s Code of Practice covers changes to supervisory teams – such changes must go through formal process and be approved by the University.

13. Where will my graduation take place?

As the awarding body is Brunel University of London, graduation would be under Brunel’s ceremonies (location depending on Brunel’s arrangements).

The “without residence” mode does not alter the awarding institution.

14. Are there graduation classifications such as Merit or Distinction?

No – research degrees (MPhil/PhD) at Brunel are awarded without classification (i.e., not “Merit” or “Distinction” as with taught programmes).

15. Is there an alumni club?

Yes – as a Brunel University graduate you would be eligible to join Brunel’s alumni network and associated opportunities (as with other Brunel alumni).

Additionally, Ahlia University operates a local chapter in collaboration with Brunel.



CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES



- Ethics and Research Integrity
- Research Ethics and Research Data Management
- Changes to Supervisory Teams
- Process and Preparation for Formally Recorded Supervisor Meetings
- Progression for Doctoral Awards (and Outcomes)
- Submission of Thesis
- Mock Vivas
- Examination (Viva voce)
- Outcome of Examination
- Changes to Registration Status, Abeyance, and Extensions

SENATE REGULATIONS – RESEARCH DEGREES



- Doctoral Degree Standards
- Admission and Registration
- Supervision
- Progress of Candidates
- The Thesis
- The Examination
- Recommendations of the Examiners
- Appeals

VITAE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK





Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication and the University will take all reasonable action to deliver services in accordance with the descriptions set out in it. A contract is made at the point when an applicant accepts an offer from Brunel, meeting any conditions, and the acceptance is communicated to Brunel and this contract is confirmed.

All students are required, as a condition of registration, to abide by and submit to the University's statutes, ordinances, regulations and rules, which are published on the University's website (a hard copy is available from the Academic Registrar at the Uxbridge address).

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