Welcome to Politics and International Studies

We hope you decide to join us at Warwick to study on one of the largest PhD programmes in politics and international studies in the UK. We pride ourselves on producing excellent research that engages with contemporary issues, reflects the latest developments in theory and practice, and challenges you to think critically.

You’ll be joining a community of students from across the globe in a diverse, cosmopolitan department. You will have opportunities to test your ideas, develop your advanced research skills and interact on a daily basis with scholars renowned in their field for their innovative ideas and policy-relevant research.

Many of our PhD students go on to secure postdoctoral funding from government agencies and private foundations and we have an outstanding track record of placing our PhD students in faculty positions in top universities around the world. We look forward to reading your application and welcoming you to the department.
Why Politics and International Studies at Warwick?

Ranked 3rd in the UK and 35th in the world for Political Science, our department attracts top postgraduate students from around the world to form a vibrant research community. We were also ranked 1st for research environment in the UK in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework and 1st for the student experience in the entire Russell Group of top UK departments.

Our department is home to over 100 PhD students, and many of our graduates now hold academic posts across the world. The range of expertise represented in our 50+ academics means we can supervise a wide variety of research projects, allowing you to personalise your degree according to your interests and career goals.

Broad-spectrum expertise

You’ll be working with experts on a wide variety of topics within politics and international studies. Our broad research agenda coheres around four clusters:

- International Political Economy
- International Relations and Security
- Public Policy and Comparative Politics
- Political Theory

Whether your research project falls within a single area or you take a cross-cluster approach, you will have a high degree of intellectual freedom to cross ‘traditional’ disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries and go where your research leads.

An international community

The research community in our department includes people from over 40 countries at all stages of their academic careers, creating an atmosphere of diverse opinion and mutual support. Lively debate and exploration of hot-topic issues from multiple viewpoints is the norm. Cast against a background of critical analysis and respect for a diversity of thinking, the department encourages you to ask searching questions and bring something fresh to debates within the field.
What is a PhD?

Technically speaking, the PhD, or ‘Doctor of Philosophy’, is the highest qualification that a student can achieve. Practically speaking, it’s a 3-4 year individual research project involving advanced scholarship focusing on a specific area of interest to you within the field of politics and international studies, and which makes an original contribution to knowledge.

Each student’s experience of the PhD is unique - some will undertake primary data collection through fieldwork and interviews, while others will do all their research in the library - but all PhDs require a high degree of self-motivation, self-reflection and self-discipline in order to be completed on time and in a way that accomplishes all they set out to do. While the degree can be lonely or exhausting at times, there are always opportunities to reach out to your peers, supervisors or other colleagues through conferences, workshops and study groups both on and off campus—and through these, you’ll get important insights into your own topic and stay engaged in the wider academic community.

Throughout this process, all PhDs also gain valuable skills in research, writing, public speaking, networking and critical thinking which are important not only in academic careers, but also in many other professions.

What is a PhD in the UK?

As opposed to undertaking the degree in other countries, a PhD in the UK is based more around individual research. In our department, it does not include any taught element outside of the first year seminar and second year research training courses, though you are able and encouraged to pursue additional training through the University (see details on page 7). Instead of examinations, your progress will be marked through yearly written reports and presentations, culminating in the final viva process.

Normally you will be expected to complete your thesis in three years, with a maximum registration period of four years if you require additional time. In contrast with some other countries, where a PhD can stretch to 7-8 years full time, a PhD in the UK is shorter because there is no significant taught component to the course. You are also not required to teach during the course of your PhD*, although optional teaching opportunities can provide you with valuable experience if you wish to pursue a career in academia.

*Please note that teaching opportunities for PhD students in our department are subject to both prior experience and availability. Nonetheless, we encourage students to undertake teaching during their degrees, and a majority choose to do so.
My PhD experience

“PAIS is full of people doing all sort of interesting things and the breadth of topics that you can listen to in the various seminars, conferences and workshops that are held throughout the week means that there is never a dull moment. In fact, sometimes it is harder to know when to stop going to all of these events and realise that you actually have to do your own work if you want to graduate with a doctorate at some point!

As a first year PhD, you have your departmental seminar, which you need to attend and prepare for once a week. This gives you the building blocks with which to advance from what you have written in your proposal. There is also a weekly departmental seminar in which a guest speaker presents their current research and is then submitted to a friendly but frank questioning time. This is a great way to understand how more experienced researchers work, and how they often face similar problems to the ones you do in the research process. It is also a great way to meet academics whom you might not have encountered before and reflect on the links between seemingly different areas of research.

Still, the reason why you are here is to conduct your research. So a lot of your time is spent reading, writing and rewriting in order to accomplish your PhD project. While this often is a lonely endeavour, the sheer size of the department means that if you prefer to work in a different way, you can always find like-minded peers and set up writing and discussion groups to work in a more collaborative environment.

Finally, life as a PhD student is not only about working and thinking about your research. You will make new friends - both in your own cohort and office-mates - with whom you will definitely knock back a few beers on occasion. Additionally, there is also time for your own hobbies and sports. While trying to do my research, I still manage to find time to train for ultramarathons, running around 100km per week. In conclusion, life in PAIS as a PhD student provides you with ample opportunities to grow academically and personally, and it is up to you to find the right balance between all the different things that you wish to accomplish.”

Daniel Silva
Current PhD candidate
The PhD programme

Undertaking a research project that spans at least three years* can be a daunting task. While not as structured as a taught postgraduate programme, the PhD is segmented into four stages, each with distinct milestones to help you monitor your progress and pursue your research at the best pace.

**Year 1**

Your first year lays the foundation for your research. On the bespoke PhD training module, Doctoral Thesis Writing in Politics and International Studies, you will develop doctoral researching skills and collaborate with your peers to overcome the challenges of PhD research. This seminar will also prepare you for the first year review, which takes place each May. This review, involving both written and presentational elements, is used to determine whether you are ready to upgrade from MPhil student to a full PhD.

**Year 2**

During your second year, you will continue to attend advanced training seminars in the department on subjects ranging from interviews to academic writing for publication while you dig into the heart of your research. Many candidates use part or all of the second year to conduct fieldwork elsewhere in the UK or abroad. The second year culminates in a review consisting of a written report on your progress and a ‘Pitch to Peers’ workshop in which you’ll have 15 minutes to present and pitch your thesis to your peers and a core panel of staff, followed by a short Q&A.

**Year 3**

While you should be in the habit of writing from day one, the process of tying your thesis together and finalising it for submission begins in earnest during year 3 and normally continues into the first part of year 4. A final progress check is conducted at the end of this year.

**Year 4**

Although you should aim to finish in year 3, realistically most students submit their thesis in year 4. The University does not normally allow an extension beyond year 4.

**Submission and the viva**

You should aim to submit your finished thesis in the first six months of your fourth year. After you submit, you will defend your thesis in front of internal and external examiners as your final assessment for the degree (the viva).

*Full-time students are registered for four years initially, the fourth year being a writing-up period not subject to fees; part-time students are initially registered for five years. Part-time students are still expected to submit First Year Review documents during year 1 of their studies.
Additional training

Additional research training and personal and professional development are available through the department, the Social Sciences Doctoral Training Centre, the Graduate School and the Library, which is home to the Wolfson Research Exchange (a study space uniquely dedicated to research students). You can also sit in on key MA modules by arrangement with your supervisor and relevant module director if appropriate. Warwick provides additional support through the Careers & Skills Office to help you build your CV and enhance your employment prospects well ahead of graduation.

PO961: Doctoral Thesis Writing in Politics and International Studies

This is a PhD training module, rather than research methods training. The seminars provide a forum in which students can discuss the experience of the research process; I sometimes describe it as ‘PhD therapy’. Week by week, we will seek collaborative solutions to common problems encountered in PhD research. Discussions with the module leader and your peers will enable you to visualise your PhD as a single, integrated piece of work and talk about it authoritatively in public. You will become more aware of its scope, its parameters and its limits.

Understanding these limits and achieving sufficient clarity and specificity of focus for your doctoral project are very important issues for a successful PhD. Sessions will cover such central issues as: specifying your intended contribution to a specialist literature; the mix between theory and empirics in research design; how to integrate primary data collection into doctoral study; recognising the limitations of data gathering techniques; and appreciating what (if anything) can be done about these. Along the way, you will acquire insights and develop your skills in how to hone, narrow and develop your research question; you will come to understand better what a ‘contribution to the literature’ might look like; and you’ll begin to sketch out what yours will be. The weekly sessions will enable you to present your ideas in academic forums with confidence. This will prepare you for successful completion of the compulsory First Year Review and for future public presentations of your doctoral research.

Professor Ben Clift

Module director
The PhD experience

Our research activities

Our department is home to three research centres (the Centre for Studies in Democratisation, the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation and the Centre for Ethics, Law and Public Affairs) and one research group (the Interdisciplinary Ethics Research Group) that are led by members of the department. These interact across our research cluster areas – as well as across disciplines within the University and beyond – and frequently play host to guest workshops, conferences and seminars that you are welcome to join. In addition, Warwick’s Global Research Priorities programme provides a platform for cross-departmental collaboration, enabling students to work together on important issues such as global governance and sustainable cities.

Finally, we also offer limited funding for students to attend conferences outside of Warwick and present their research to a wider audience.

Student-led initiatives

There’s more to life as a PhD student than research—in fact, we offer many opportunities for you to engage with the academic community in the department and participate in university-wide activities.

One of these is through student-led groups such as the Critical International and Political Studies (CRIPS) Graduate Working Group, which regularly organises different activities including the PhD Research Seminar series, the Mock First Year Review for first year PhD students, professional socialisation workshops, as well as social events.

There is also the East Asia Study Group, which holds events on subjects specific to the East Asian region.

“PAIS is very supportive with regards to teaching, conferences, research programmes, and other research- and career-related opportunities. I particularly enjoy the familial community created by the friendly PAIS staff, post-docs and PhD students, with whom I feel inspired every day through our conversations on both academic and non-academic topics.”

Jue Wang
PhD 2014
The PhD experience

Working as a member of the CRIPS’s organising committee has been an incredible personal and collective experience. CRIPS has long provided a platform for PhD students and early career scholars to present their work and discuss it with each other. This is extremely important, as young researchers may not have many opportunities or the network required to present their in-progress research to an academic audience. During the academic year 2014/2015, CRIPS hosted a number of extremely interesting early career scholars from both the UK and elsewhere in Europe. The turnout and overall participation has been pretty staggering, especially considering how busy PhD students can be. CRIPS has also delivered career advice and professionalisation workshops where established academics from the department have been providing invaluable advice to PhD students. In an ever more competitive academic labour market, it is crucial to be strategic when it comes to start sketching out a career plan by the end of your PhD. That is why this year CRIPS has organised multiple workshops and seminars with this objective in mind. Of course, CRIPS has also been very active in organising social events. With after-presentation drinks and summer BBQs, one of CRIPS’s greatest achievements for this academic year has been to strengthen the social interaction of the PhD community at PAIS.

Overall, this year’s experience at CRIPS has provided me with an excellent understanding of how things actually work within the department. I learned how to organise research seminars, apply for departmental funds, request seminar rooms and catering, etc. Finally, being in close contact with so many people in the department has strengthened my relationships with the whole PAIS community.

Events and societies

We also host a number of events featuring staff members and guest speakers, including our Departmental Seminar Series, the focal point of research culture and activity in the department. Past presentations have covered topics including ‘Twisting Arms and Sending Messages: Terrorist Tactics in Civil War’ and ‘International Election Observers and the Credibility of Elections’.

There are also many social activities offered by our department throughout the year, including Christmas dinner and the end-of-year barbeque, where you can meet up and chat with fellow students and staff members in a relaxed atmosphere.

Beyond the department, there is a vibrant campus atmosphere, with many societies and initiatives to get involved with including the Warwick International Development Society, Politics Society, China in Focus, the Warwick Emerging Markets Forum and One World Week. You can also write articles for Pinpoint Politics, a political commentary website jointly run by postgraduates from our department and King’s College London.
Finding a supervisor

The relationship with your supervisor is of crucial importance to your research and progress as a PhD candidate. The department will normally allocate two supervisors, at least one of whom will be actively engaged in, or has had experience of, research in the field of your thesis. Your supervisors will be your guides and mentors as you design, research and finally write up your PhD project.

Supervision

Before you submit your application, you should ensure we have a member of staff who shares your research interests. We receive many good applications each year that we cannot accept simply because we have nobody to supervise the thesis in the department. Therefore, once you have written your proposal, you should consult our staff research directory to find out who is doing what in the department and identify potential supervisors. Applicants are encouraged to make contact with potential supervisors prior to submitting an application. While individual academics cannot make a decision to accept a given application, most successful applicants have contacted potential supervisors to ensure that there is an interest in supervising their particular research project.

Please note that if the department does not have a member of staff in your specialist area, or if all academics in your area are currently at full supervisory capacity, we will not be able to make an offer no matter the quality of your application as a whole.

Making contact

Once you have identified a potential supervisor, you are very welcome to approach them to see whether they would be interested in your particular project. The best method for making contact is by emailing your proposal with an introductory letter and project summary to your potential supervisor(s).

Please note that while many academics are happy to speak with prospective students, not all are receptive to speculative contact. Also note that an expression of interest from a supervisor, or even their involvement in refining your proposal, is not a guarantee that your application will be successful—particularly if your submitted proposal is not up to scratch.

One of the primary reasons for unsuccessful applications is an inadequately specified research proposal which does not go far enough in convincing potential supervisors that the applicant has it within them to write a successful PhD. In order to get your prospective supervisor(s) to say ‘yes’, you really do have to submit an excellent proposal!

Find an expert through our staff listing online:

warwick.ac.uk/pais/people
On the supervisory relationship

“I am very happy with how the critical dialogue towards my research has flowed between my supervisors. They have pushed my boundaries of thinking and have made me reflect on new, interesting ideas about how to engage with my research. I have enough freedom to debate with them and this has made me be all the better during the creative process of writing my thesis.”

Carlos Zepeda
Current PhD candidate
The research proposal

The research proposal is arguably the most important element of your PhD application. You need to submit a fully specified research proposal at this stage; while we fully acknowledge that your project will evolve as you conduct your research, you must submit a convincing proposal, worked up in full, which is sufficiently rigorous and of sufficient quality before you will be allowed entry onto our programme.

The type of robust research proposal that is required to attract supervisory commitment and an offer will address the five points outlined below. Typical proposals are 3,000-4,000 words long; however, this is only a guideline. The emphasis will be on the quality of the proposal and whether or not it fits with a particular supervisor’s research interests, not on the word count.

The points you must address in your proposal are:

**Central research question**

This should be simply stated in the first instance and then suitably fleshed out to show why it is timely and important – both intellectually and politically – for you to be writing a PhD on this topic. The central research question is your first chance to make the case for being accepted onto our programme by capturing the attention of potential supervisors.

**Context**

You must show how your central research question relates to existing academic studies in your field. This requires a short literature review which will situate your proposed research within the framework of the dominant perspectives on similar issues in the existing literature. Ideally, you should be able to demonstrate how your proposed research fills a gap in the literature and therefore adds substantively and can make a lasting contribution to academic debates. One key criterion for writing a successful PhD is that it is original work, so you must try to avoid setting up your analysis in a way which simply replicates work which can already be found within the literature.
The Department has a reputation for prioritising doctoral work which is theoretically oriented. As a consequence, you are much more likely to be successful in your application if you are authoritative in your treatment of theoretical debates. You need to say which body of theory will underpin the explanatory framework to be used in your PhD, why that particular theory was chosen and what advantages it gives you for addressing your central research question.

**Theoretical framework**

**Case studies and methodology**

You must convincingly discuss the type of data you will need to collect in order to empirically ground your research. The only exception in this respect is for projects centred on matters of abstract political theory. It is important to draw attention to the links between your chosen body of theory and the substantive case study (or studies) you will be using. To do so, you will need to name your case studies and demonstrate why they are appropriate to your central research question, outline the methodologies you will adopt, and comment on the relevance of those methodologies to meeting your central research aims through focusing on their generic strengths.

**Problems**

You should reflect on the types of problems you are likely to encounter whilst undertaking your research and how these might be overcome. This will demonstrate that you are forward-thinking in your approach to doctoral studies and that you are aware of the fact that writing a PhD often requires you to activate a secondary plan at some stage of your studies.
Examples of current PhD project titles include:

- **Turkey’s private sector:**
  A stabilizing element in northern Iraq

- **The (bio) politics of technology in an age of drone-warfare:**
  Security, ethics and ‘human life’

- **From whistleblowing to Wikileaks:**
  Secrecy and Power in the information age

- **Social democracy in post-crisis Britain and France:**
  Still a viable alternative?

- **Overcoming obstacles to nuclear disarmament:**
  Transforming state identities through co-operation and trust-building

- **Citizenship in flux:**
  A comparative study of political participation of young citizens in Taiwan and the United States

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**Thesis title: The Political Economy of Commodity Regions: the case of soybean in South America Studies**

“My research focuses on the emergence in South America of a transnational economic area specialized in the production of soybean, fostered by the high global demand for this commodity and by the creation of a single value chain within the region, generating de facto integration. Literature on regionalism has recently offered a focus on ‘bottom-up’ regional identities and practices. Much of this work nonetheless remains heavily state-centric, and research on the dynamics of regional integration beyond the state remains scarce. The purpose of the thesis is to analyse the emergence of this new unity, the conditions of its emergence and the structure of this ‘commodity region’ as a cross-border entity.”

**Maria Giraudo**
Current PhD candidate
The fieldwork experience

“At the end of the second year of my PhD, I spent six weeks in ‘the field’. Having spent the last two years refining my research design and analysing existing literature, I finally got to move on to the data collection phase of my PhD. During my stay in Lebanon, I spent most of my time contacting possible interviewees and conducting interviews with former combatants, party members, civil society representatives, researchers and journalists. Doing research in a post-conflict country is not easy. On top of that, my research is situated in the field of conflict and terrorism studies, so you hear many disturbing stories, but it was still a great experience. After two years of exploring my topic from an academic perspective, it was incredibly rewarding to be able to go to ‘the field’, to speak to the people who have experienced all of this themselves and to see that this project you came up with is actually working—that you do get answers to the questions you came up with and that everything is coming together as you had hoped it would.

I also liked the flexibility you have during fieldwork, where your daily schedule very much depends on the availability of your interviewees and thus changes every day. I could even take my daughter, and even though I was very busy with work, we managed to squeeze in regular trips to the park, the beach and some of the many restaurants and sights Beirut and its surroundings have to offer. I am now back in England analysing the data I have gathered and very much looking forward to my next field trip in a few months’ time.”

Jennifer Philippa Eggert
Current PhD candidate

Thesis title: Female combatants, non-state political violence and organisational decision-making
Careers

Whether your aim is to join academia, engage in other professional research or otherwise put your expertise and research skills to use, your Warwick PhD will give you a competitive edge in the job market. A high proportion of our PhD alumni have secured research fellowships, academic posts and positions as experts in think tanks and other organisations around the world.

Warwick Politics and International Studies PhD graduates have gone on to academic positions such as:

- Lecturer, Aberystwyth University
- Assistant Professor, Central European University
- Associate Professor, Ritsumeikan University
- Teaching Fellow, University College London
- Lecturer, University of Southampton
- Visiting Research Fellow, Keio University

Examples of Warwick Politics and International Studies PhD graduates’ job titles include:

- General Director of International Affairs, Venezuelan National Electoral Council
- Director of Government Relations, Open University
- Consultant, PKF Cooper Parry
- Associate Geopolitical Analyst, National Bank Financial
- International Relations Specialist, Fundacion Secretariado Gitano
- Programme Officer / Policy Advisor, Cordaid

To learn more about where some of our other alumni have ended up, check out our Employability & Alumni pages online:

warwick.ac.uk/pais/beyondpais

Over 89% of Warwick Politics and International Studies PhD Graduates were in jobs or further study six months after graduating.
"I joined PAIS in 2007 on the MA in International Relations programme having developed an interest in East Asia during my BA in History, also at Warwick. During my Masters year I particularly enjoyed the course International Relations of the Asia-Pacific taught by Professor Chris Hughes. It was his example and the quality of Asia-related research within PAIS which encouraged me to apply for the East Asia Postgraduate Fellowship and complete a doctorate from the Department. Throughout my research, PAIS was enormously supportive and the University's stellar reputation proved invaluable during my fieldwork in Japan, India and the United States when seeking interviews with high-level academics and bureaucrats.

Since completing my PhD, I lived in Tokyo on a Daiwa Scholarship through the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, which includes intensive Japanese language training, homestay and work placement. I had the opportunity to work in the Japanese Diet (Parliament), British Embassy, Tokyo and a leading think tank, the Tokyo Foundation, to continue my research.

I’m currently a Policy Adviser at the Ministry of Defence, which I am really enjoying. Roles change fast in the civil service, but for now, I’m on the Fast Stream on a Defence and Security option within the scheme. If you are looking for an international education in political affairs, I highly recommend PAIS.”

Vicky Tuke
PhD 2012

"For me, the best thing about the PhD programme in PAIS is the strong sense of community that I feel with both other PhD students and Faculty members. The PhD students are very sociable and frequently meet up to discuss work or (more often than not) simply go out for a few drinks. It’s great also that many Faculty members tend to work in their offices rather than from home, and so can regularly be seen around the Department.

My supervisors were the best. I have benefited enormously from the supervision they have provided. As a result of their supervision, I have improved the quality of my arguments, learned to write more clearly, and become more marketable in the job market. I have benefited not only from formal supervisions, but also from countless discussions in seminars, workshops and over lunch.”

Tom Parr
PhD 2016
Funding is one of the biggest challenges when considering postgraduate study, which is why we are working to increase the number of part- and fully-funded scholarships every year.

You’ll find a listing of scholarships offered by the department, the university, and other funding bodies, such as the ESRC’s Doctoral Training Centre, in the table below along with details about eligibility and any other restrictions which might apply.

While deadlines change from year to year, those for central University-run scholarships are expected to be in **early January**, and departmental studentships in **late February**.

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<tr>
<th>Opportunity</th>
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<tr>
<td>PAIS Departmental Studentship</td>
<td>2 available (1 Home/EU, 1 Overseas) Opportunity funded by the department Full tuition fees plus maintenance grant Apply directly to the department</td>
<td>All students starting in 2016 or students currently in their first year of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSGR Studentship</td>
<td>1 available PAIS Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation (CSGR) studentship Full tuition fees plus maintenance grant Apply directly to the department</td>
<td>All students starting in 2016 or students currently in their first year of study with a project relevant to CSGR’s strategic priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESRC Doctoral Training Centre (DTC)</td>
<td>UK Research Council funded doctoral training centre Full tuition fees for Home/EU students Maintenance grant for Home students only</td>
<td>Home/EU students starting in 2016 or Home/EU students currently in their first year of study</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAIS Maintenance Grants (for DTC winners only)</td>
<td>3 available Opportunity funded by the department Maintenance grant only No separate application necessary</td>
<td>Home/EU students who have successfully received DTC funding for tuition fees only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chancellor’s International Scholarship</td>
<td>25 available University of Warwick funded studentships Full Overseas tuition fees plus maintenance grant Apply through Admissions/Graduate School form</td>
<td>Overseas students starting in 2016 or overseas students currently in their first year of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bridges Programme (Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships)</td>
<td>Funded jointly by the Leverhulme Trust and the University of Warwick Full tuition fees plus monthly stipend Apply through the Bridges Programme website</td>
<td>All students starting in 2016 or students currently in their first year of study with a project relevant to the funding guidelines</td>
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Other options
Aside from these, the Graduate School and external funders offer other options each year for both Home and Overseas candidates. You can find links to these and to two Warwick databases of scholarship opportunities on our website, as well as further details on eligibility, the application processes and deadlines.

Check back often, as new opportunities arise throughout the year.

warwick.ac.uk/pais/study/studyphd/funding

Next steps
Although there is no strict deadline for applications, you are strongly advised to submit your application at least two weeks before any funding deadlines at Warwick, and no later than 31 July if you are not applying for university funding.

Entry requirements
The PhD programme has strict entry requirements in addition to a strong, viable research proposal that academics in the department are willing to supervise:

► Your academic transcript. We require a good first degree (2.1 BA/BSc Hons or equivalent); normally an MA/MSc in a related subject area is also required.

► Two academic references. Please note that professional references will not be accepted unless you have been out of education for over two years.

► English language proficiency. For non-native English speakers, please note that we require a minimum IELTS score of 7.0 or equivalent.
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