

# GD901-60 Research Dissertation

**23/24**

**Department**

Global Sustainable Development

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Mandy Sadan

**Credit value**

60

**Module duration**

22 weeks

**Assessment**

80% coursework, 20% exam

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module is the capstone project module for GSD Masters students wishing to develop the necessary learning for a career in knowledge creation and management through research, in either the academic or applied spheres.

### Module aims

- To conduct an interdisciplinary, independent research project with a sustainable development focus.
- To develop and hone real-world research skills
- To purposefully design and undertake a research project with key factors such as budget, risk and ethics at the forefront.
- To think beyond conventional disciplines when making decisions that impact the sustainable development agenda, and the risks to future ecological, social, or cultural wellbeing.
- Apply a creative, yet systematic, approach to addressing questions and issues surrounding sustainable development

### Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be

covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

The purpose of this dissertation module is to promote research skills and understanding of principles of research dissemination through the selection of an appropriate output for communicating the research project, its methods, and findings.

In the early stages of the module, students will compile a project management plan. Students will then complete their research project, and present it in the format of either a journal article or a policy briefing-type document, or will select a different form of output such as an exhibition, artwork, graphic comic, documentary or video, although other formats will also be considered (hereafter 'creative output'). If the student selects a journal submission they should identify an appropriate journal, and present their work according to the submission guidelines for manuscripts. If they select a creative output, they must identify any training required and how that will be accessed, and a breakdown of hours for producing the output showing that it is manageable within the workload hours expected for the module.

The module will culminate in a viva, where students will present their research to a panel in a 30 minute viva, including a 10 minute oral presentation.

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Engage in issues of transformation and change with a sophisticated understanding and application of appropriate evidence and scholarly research, in both analysis of the situation and the development of potential responses
- Identify and diagnose the complexity of real world problems, with particular attention to understanding the interactions between human communities, technology and ecological systems, over multiple generations and between demographic groups and cultures; and assess the outcomes of potential interactions within different domains and at different scales
- Describe complex issues in clear terms and communicate about them effectively and succinctly, both orally and in writing
- Undertake self-managed knowledge creation and learning as part of a problem-based, focused response to issues of sustainable development.

## **Indicative reading list**

Brown, V. A., Harris, J. A., & Russell, J. Y. (Eds.). (2010). Tackling wicked problems through the transdisciplinary imagination. Earthscan.

Kueffer, C., Underwood, E., Hadorn, G. H., Holderegger, R., Lehning, M., Pohl, C., ... & Edwards, P. (2012). Enabling effective problem-oriented research for sustainable development. *Ecology and Society*, 17(4).

Wiesmann, Urs Martin, Hans Hurni, Cordula Ott, and Claudia Zingerli. "Combining the concepts of transdisciplinarity and partnership in research for sustainable development." (2011): 43-70.

## **Research element**

Healey & Jenkins (2009) propose that Research-led-teaching design should consider four discrete opportunities. This module has been designed to include three of these opportunities.

1. Research-led learning, where the module syllabus is developed from current research in relevant fields, being based on contemporary and seminal, peer reviewed and other high quality research literature.  
As such, all knowledge for student engagement will be consciously and specifically chosen for its merits in reference to broader academic understanding. This will initially include developing a realistic project management plan prior to undertaking research.
2. Research-tutored learning, where students engage actively in discussing high quality, contemporary and seminal research literature. This module will provide students with the opportunity to critically identify existing gaps in the wider academic knowledge and understanding.
3. Research-based learning, where student use developing methodological skills to create original knowledge of their own. This module will provide students with the opportunity to design and conduct their own research project, while developing skills in effective research communication and dissemination.

## **Interdisciplinary**

Positive global transformations are widely recognised to require transdisciplinary knowledge creation, and this module builds on previous transdisciplinary methodology learning to provide an opportunity to develop primary knowledge creation process skills, through the completion of a substantial research project.

Authentic assessment will require students to demonstrate transdisciplinary aptitude, in the creation of a project management plan and an academic or practitioner output. The Viva will further support students to develop appropriate research communication skills while demonstrating their understanding of their chosen topic, and approaches to transdisciplinary research.

Transdisciplinary aptitude will be explicitly embedded in relevant marking rubrics developed for use across the degree, as adapted from the standard university scale and descriptors.

## **International**

Subject to appropriate clearances through relevant governance frameworks, students will have the opportunity to undertake research in other national contexts if they so wish.

## **Subject specific skills**

Subject specific skills will be directly linked to the projects designed and undertaken by the students. Projects will be linked to the Sustainable Development Agenda, integrating elements of the Economic, Environmental and Social pillars of sustainability.

## **Transferable skills**

Project Management

Transdisciplinary project development

Communication and dissemination skills, both oral and written, and, as appropriate, 'creative'.

Problem-solving, solution-focussed approaches to sustainable development issues.

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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required	Optional
Lectures	2 sessions of 1 hour (20%)	
Project supervision	4 sessions of 1 hour (40%)	1 session of
Supervised practical classes	2 sessions of 2 hours (40%)	
Total	10 hours	

### Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group D1

	Weighting	Study time
Dissertation	65%	555 hours
Students will conduct their research project, including appropriate data analysis, and prepare their work for assessment through an appropriate written format (such as Journal Article or Policy Brief etc) or other form of creative output (such as an online or inperson exhibition, short film or video, graphic medium, appropriate to the project). If the creative output is chosen, a 3000 word report examining the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of the creative output should be submitted instead of a 10000 dissertation. Hours spent should not exceed that for the written dissertation.		
Project Management Plan	15%	15 hours
To include:		

## Weighting

## Study time

- Use of a relevant template from an appropriate funding body or a workplan for producing a creative output (e.g. discussion of software or media to be used, if any)
- Risk Assessment
- Budgeting
- Ethics
  - . Project Timelines
  - . Training requirements

Dissertation Viva

20%

20 hours

Students will give a 10 minute oral presentation on their transdisciplinary research project, prior to a 20 minute Q&A based discussion with the panel.

## Feedback on assessment

All students will receive written feedback on each assessment via Tabula. Students will also be offered individual feedback for all assessments.

[Past exam papers for GD901](#)

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## Availability

## Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 1 of TGDA-L801 Postgraduate Taught Global Sustainable Development