

Participatory action research: theories, methods and challenges

A two-day course for doctoral students and members of community organisations

Wednesday 17th and Thursday 18th June, 2026

Location: Calman Learning Centre, Durham University, UK. DH1 3LY

Timings: 17th June, 10.30-17.00; 18th June, 9.30-16.00



Following eleven very successful courses in previous years, we are pleased to offer an in-person two-day course designed to develop understanding and skills in the theory and practice of participatory action research (PAR). PAR is increasingly popular, involving people affected by/interested in a research topic taking an active part in designing, carrying out and putting research into practice. The aim of PAR is to bring about change – for example, in people's living conditions, service provision or public policy. Doctoral students taking a PAR approach face many challenges, including negotiating how to work with partner organisations, handling co-ownership of research findings in relation to the thesis, and responsibilities for working for social change.

The course will cover key values, ethical/political issues, theorising and critiquing PAR, working with partner organisations to influence change, and participatory approaches to research design, process, analysis, dissemination and implementation. The course will be participatory, using small groups to focus on specific questions and evaluate learning. Community partners and academics will act as tutors. Ten places will be reserved for members of community organisations, enabling a process of mutual learning for doctoral students and community partners.

The objectives of the course are to:

1. Enable participants to develop critical understandings of the uses, advantages and limitations of PAR, and an ability to draw on a range of theoretical and practical insights.
2. Develop participants' awareness of ethical and political challenges in PAR, particularly in community-university partnership working, and strategies for handling these.
3. Facilitate the development of participants' confidence in working with the complexities of PAR within different disciplines and settings.
4. Offer participants the experience of learning and understanding through active participation during the course, particularly through the co-inquiry group model.
5. Develop participants' understanding of the impacts that PAR may have, and processes for creating and capturing these.

Facilitators: The course will be facilitated by a team of academic and community-based practitioners of PAR, with a variety of areas of expertise and experience, including: Professor Sarah Banks, Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University, UK; Professor Mary Brydon Miller, University of Louisville, USA; Professor Tina Cook, Liverpool Hope University, UK; and Professor Kristin Kalsem, University of Cincinnati, USA.

Who should come: The course will be of interest to doctoral students and members of community organisations who do, or are interested in doing, research that is participatory. In selecting participants from community organisations, priority will be given to those based in North East England or Northern Ireland. **PLEASE NOTE: *This course is only available to doctoral students and members of community organisations.***

Timing: the course will run from 10.30 to 17.00 on Day 1 and 9.30 to 16.00 on Day 2.

How to apply: Places are limited to 50, so early booking is advisable. Please complete the online booking form: [Participatory action research: theories, methods and challenges – Fill in form](#)

Demand is usually high, so selection is based on the case you make in the application for why you will benefit from the course.

The closing date is 31 March 2026. Early booking is advisable as the course is likely to fill up quickly.

Costs:

- The course is **free** for PhD students from **NINEDTP Universities**: Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Queens Belfast, Teesside and Ulster, and for members of community organisations.
- **£60** to attend for postgraduate research students from other Universities, paid via invoice. This fee includes meals during the two days, but **doesn't include overnight accommodation**.

Accommodation: On request, NINE DTP can provide details of local hotels and B and Bs after your place has been confirmed. You will need to book this and pay directly yourself.

Further information: Please email research.nine@durham.ac.uk with booking or accessibility enquiries. If you require any further information about the course content, please email Sarah Banks s.j.banks@durham.ac.uk