

How to apply for a PhD in the UK

April 13th BNAC 15th Nepal Study Days

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PhD Workshop

13Th April 2017
13.45-15.15



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Liverpool John Moores University



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Bournemouth University



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Britain - Nepal
Academic Council



BU
Bournemouth University

Location: Bournemouth University, Bournemouth House, 17-19 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH1 3LT

लण्डन । पिएचडी गर्न चाहने बेलायतस्थित नेपाली विद्यार्थीहरूका लागि एउटा सुखद खबर छ ।

'पोटेन्सियल पिएचडी क्याण्डिडेट'हरूका लागि उपयोगी हुने खालका सबै जानकारी सम्बन्धित विज्ञहरूबाटै उपलब्ध गराउने उद्देश्यले एक कार्यशाला आयोजना हुंदैछ ।

Why do a PhD?

- Earning ability
- Prestige
- Intellectually challenging – become an expert
- Transferrable skills
- Enjoyment - A PhD is about pursuing knowledge for the passion of acquiring knowledge

What is a PhD?

- Doctor of Philosophy (Doctorate)
- In a subject: management, nursing
- Full-time 3 years (5 to 7 years p/t)
- In-depth research with unique contribution to knowledge
- Written up in a thesis then defended in voce viva (oral exam)

Difference PhD and Masters

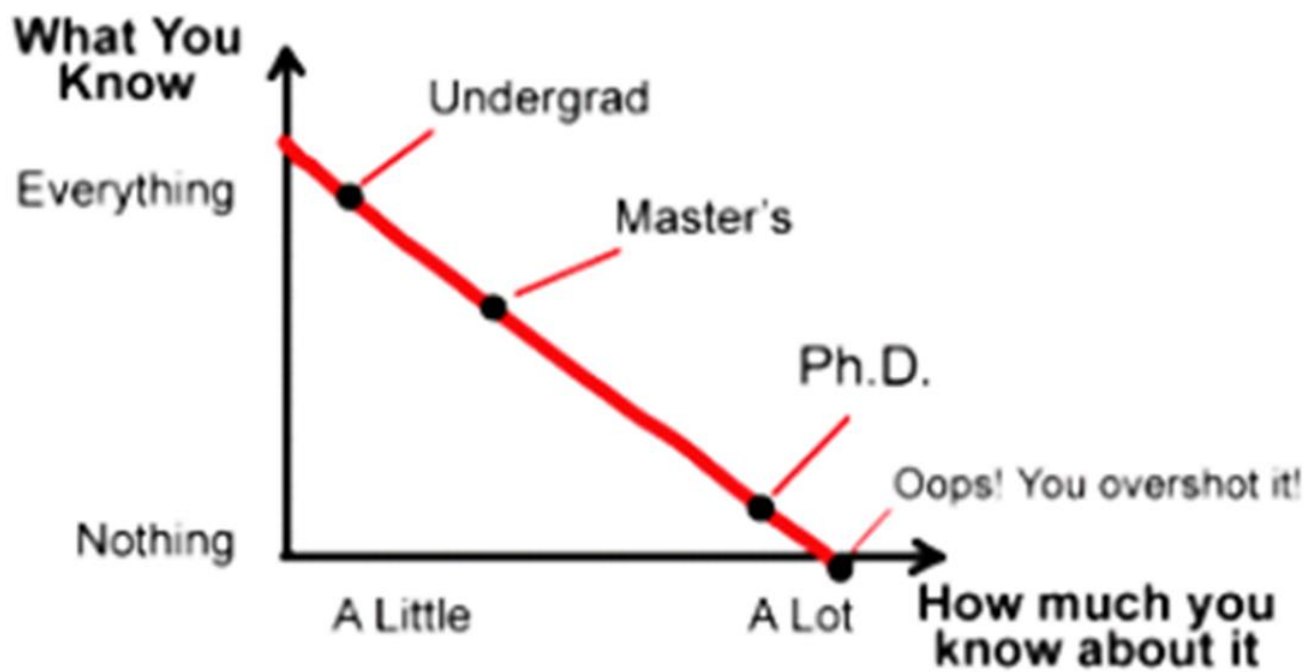
Ph.D. thesis must make original & significant contribution to existing knowledge

- Develop theories, connection of previously unrelated facts.
- Material in the thesis must be publishable.

UK universities look at the following factors when you apply:

1. Academic qualifications
2. Nature & viability of proposed research
3. University's capacity to give appropriate supervision throughout your research
4. English language proficiency
5. Evidence of appropriate resources to support your living costs & fees over the period of your research

What You Know vs How much you know about it



Choosing a PhD project:

- Establish which topic you are interested in
- Find out what is already known about this topic
- Read scientific papers and other relevant material to develop your knowledge
- Find the experts in your field/ on your topic
- Establish (draft) research question

Writing a research proposal is both a science and an art. Thus a good research proposal is based on:

- (a) Scientific facts, a research question, pilot data, a lit. review;
- (b) The art of communication, good/ clear academic writing.

Application process I

- Apply to individual universities, there is no central application (unlike UCAS for UG)
- Contact potential supervisors
- Register your interest & discuss your research interests
- Interview (in person / Skype / telephone)
- Check out funded-research opportunities

Application process II

- Application form/CV
- Provide evidence of skills
 - Research skills/experience
 - Written/spoken communication (e.g., TOEFL)
 - Organisation/time management
 - Team work skills
 - Project work

This differs for each & every PhD proposal !

What should be in a proposal?

- Objective & justification
- Introduction & background
- Review of literature (what is known)
- Methodology
- Time frame/schedule/Gantt chart
- Supervisors (preferably named)
- Budget/ resources: facilities, lab costs, travel

Aims & objectives of PhD Proposal

- Aims & objectives of proposed study should be clearly stated
- The aim (sometimes called ‘research question’) is what you want to find out in general.
- Objectives should be specific, achievable & measurable
- Objectives around what and how you plan to do your research
- Too many objectives = sign of lack of focus or not being able to prioritize.

Take your time: Apply early

- Check potential supervisor's specialist area and interests
 - University website staff pages
 - LinkedIn & Facebook
 - Scopus for publications

Evaluate scientific papers/reports, especially to find work in the same research area: “Has your proposed question perhaps been addressed in a different setting/ field?”

Requirements PhD proposal

Proposed research (+ abstract) max. 1,500 words, including:

- Title of proposed research;
- Research context and significance: short literature review of key articles and books in the proposed area of research;
- Overview of general area of study + discipline of which it is a part;
- Summary of proposed research, i.e. research questions and an explanation as to why they are significant;
- Methodology and your understanding of proposed methods;
- Timescale, i.e. what you hope to achieve in each year;
- Bibliography/ key articles and books used in your application.

Additional points writing PhD proposal

- Don't copy from your MSc dissertation
- Don't copy proposals from the web (e.g. Bournemouth University uses TURNITIN/ plagiarism software)
- Read your proposed supervisors' work/research
- Have proposal edited by native English speaker
- Don't propose research that has already been done or that is underway!


Interviews for applicants

- Opportunity for you and supervisor to get to know one another. Could you work together?
- Read your application form again
- University will be looking at your experience, motivation, ability to complete on time.
- Use university careers for advice/ mock interview
- Check eligibility for grant/award

VISA

- If you need a visa for postgraduate study, think about time it will take for application to be processed and make sure your visa is ready in time for beginning of PhD.
- Advice about immigration & visas -
<https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/study/international/coming-bournemouth/immigration>

Funded PhD places




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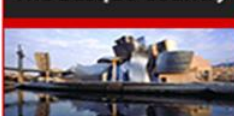
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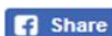
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PhD Funding - A Checklist Of Possible Funding Sources



There are probably more funding sources for your PhD than you think. It's worth making sure you have investigated them all.

Funding bodies support PhD students in different ways; some will pay course fees only; some will include a stipend (maintenance costs) or travel expenses while others will simply be a one-off award to ease the financial burden of further study. Similarly, each funding body will have its own criteria for eligibility. At PhD level full funding will tend to be awarded on academic merit, but there are also some that take into account financial background and other criteria such as gender (such as in the case of the British Federation of Women Graduates).

Below is a list of all of the main sources of funding for UK based PhD students.

Research Councils

The seven Research Councils currently fund around 19,000 doctoral students in the UK. However, funding is made available through the participating universities rather than the research councils themselves. Eligibility criteria and award amounts are standardised (with Research Councils UK acting as an umbrella the seven Research Councils work under), and you will find many other funded PhDs referring to research council rates when defining their own. Research council studentships include fees and a minimum stipend of £13,863 per annum (2014/15 rates) which is paid tax-free.

[Arts and Humanities Research Council \(AHRC\)](#)

[Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council \(BBSRC\)](#)

[Economic and Social Research Council \(ESRC\)](#)

[Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council \(EPSRC\)](#)

[Medical Research Council \(MRC\)](#)

Do your research & beware !

- A PhD is a major commitment;
- Relatively high drop-out rates;
- It can be a lonely existence, soon you are the world's expert of a very specific topic.

Free ebook: Career Planning for PhDs



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<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/studentships/1534/phd-funding-a-checklist-of-possible-funding-sources>

Any questions?

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