

Finding and funding a PhD

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LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



We are here to help



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Contact us on careers@lshtm.ac.uk

- Please keep mics on mute unless you'd like to ask a question;
- Use the chat box lots;
- Trouble with sound? Trying leaving and coming back, try a different browser;
- The session will be recorded and put on Moodle under 'Further Study (Recordings)' and to replace the booking link under Forthcoming events

- Why a PhD?
- Brief look at academic careers;
- Structure of a PhD;
- Routes in (including some example programmes and deadlines);
- Where to look for advertised PhDs and for funding information;
- Finding the right PhD;
- Self-sourced and funded PhDs;
- Questions...

Why a PhD?

- I would like a long term career in academic research
- I want a PhD to get into industry, or specialist / expert roles in non academic organisations
- I want a PhD for long term career progression, for example in NGOs
- Just interested in topic / doing research – not sure long term

Academics' suggestions

'Knowing the whys'
(being the 'producer'
rather than one of the
'actors')

'Cognitive need'
(wanting/needing to find
answers – valued by
employers...)

'Contribution to new
knowledge'

Career
progression/career
necessity

What does it take?

Do you have:

Determination

Ability to
reflect

Creativity

Resilience

Confidence in
your ability

Something
you want to
research

Ability to keep
the bigger
picture in
mind

The passion to go
in to work and do
the same thing
again even if all
your experiments
failed last week

Some thoughts from those who have been there

Postdoctoral Researcher:

- It requires a lot of work and dedication. It is important to think about whether you really want to pursue it.
- For some careers, a PhD may not be required, but it will always provide you with better ways of thinking and viewing problems.

Associate Editor, a Science Newsmagazine

- Do it because you really love the subject, not because you just want to get ahead.

Senior Scientific Officer, a biotech company

- Choose a subject carefully with a job and career path in mind.

Brief look at academic careers

Most people do not stay in academia, but for those who do, titles vary between disciplines/institutions/countries:

- Postdoc – research associate/fellow;
 - Associate lecturer (often hourly paid);
 - Teaching Fellow;
 - Lecturer;
 - Senior Lecturer;
 - Reader;
 - Assistant Professor;
 - Professor.
- <https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/the-essential-guide-to-moving-up-the-academic-career-ladder.pdf>

Many posts are fixed term contracts, especially in early career.

Quotes from academic careers forum

Q: How did you decide academia was for you?

A: I used to think academia was 'only for really clever people, now I know it's really determined people who sit down and get the damned thing done'.

The attraction of academia:

- You think about this new thing and it keeps being new.
- Being inquisitive in nature and being persistent.
- Biggest joy is being the first person to make a discovery (makes up for all the hours and weeks and years when you're trying to do something and it keeps on failing – you need to be driven).
- you are the world expert in that thing.

PhD – structure and types

- A novel, in-depth study of specific field – original contribution;
- Results in written report as Thesis or Dissertation ;
- Oral examination, with 2+ experts ('Viva') follows submission. Publication(s) preferable;
- Often initially registered as MPhil before 'upgrade';
- Work closely with 1, or more, experienced researchers;
- UK: Traditionally, 3 yrs Increasingly 4 yr programmes (in sciences);
- Part time PhDs possible;
- LSHTM 'staff PhD';
- Most in Universities and other HEIs;
- Other places: Government Labs, Hospital labs, Research Institutions, Commercial labs.

Structured programme (Centres for Doctoral Training/Doctoral Training Partnerships):

- At universities – PhD places funded by;
 - UK Research councils (e.g. BBSRC, MRC, ESRC);
 - Research charities, e.g. Wellcome, CRUK, Gates Foundation;
 - Transnational organisations e.g. EU (...?);
- Advertised Collaborative / 'CASE' studentships – universities & external collaborator.

Specific PhD (like applying for specific job)

- At universities – advertised PhD studentships funded by existing 'Principle Investigator' (PI) grant.

'Staff PhD'

- Study while working (e.g. research assistant/fellow).

'Bespoke' - approach supervisor, put together proposal and then apply for / arrange funding:

- Research scholarships/bursaries at host university;
- Charity funding;
- Research councils;
- Overseas funding bodies/British Council;
- Self-funded.

PhD 'by publication'.

Other doctoral studies, such as DrPH.

Funding for international students

- For funded places check details of each scheme – some open to international applicants, others not;
- Also check level of funding (often only home fees);
- Useful info: [FindaPhD.com guide](#);
- Filter search to restrict to [PhDs with funding for non UK/EU applicants](#);
- Funding from home country/government;
- Get involved with project, and PhD opportunity may come from that;
- PhD at non-UK university.

Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs)/Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs)



- 4 year (usually) funded PhD programmes offered by most funding councils;
- Located in individual HEIs or consortia of HEIs;
- Taught elements, transferable skills, some placements;
- First year rotate between different projects, focus on own project in years 2-4;
- Some relevant research councils (depending on your research background/interests):
 - BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council);
 - MRC (Medical Research Council);
 - ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council);

BBSRC and ESRC funded programmes

- [LIDo](#) (inc LSHTM) – London Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme, closing date 10 Jan 2024, 41 fully funded studentships across DTP and iCASE routes of entry
- [Oxford Interdisciplinary Bioscience DTP](#) ([application deadline](#) 5 January 2024);
- [Cambridge Biosciences BBSRC DTP](#) (deadline 5 December 2023);
- [Manchester](#) BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership (deadline for April 2024 entry is 15 January 2024; for September 2024 entry is 15 June 2024)

[Current ESRC funded DTPs](#) and ESRC funded Centre for Doctoral Training: [Data Analytics and Society Centre for Doctoral Training](#) (Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield).

ESRC funded DTP including LSHTM: [Ubel](#) (UCL, Bloomsbury and East London) includes a mental health pathway.

MRC funded programmes

Example: [MRC London Intercollegiate Doctoral \(LID\) Training Partnership studentships](#), 6+3 studentships each year.

For this new award, "We have made widening participation and cultivating a supportive, inclusive, and diverse community of future scientific leaders core aspects of our approach to developing the DTP. **This includes a ring-fenced scheme for UK students from ethnic minority backgrounds.**"

All funded projects will link to one of these research themes:

- [Global Health](#)
- [Health Data Science](#)
- [Translational and Implementation Research](#)
- [Infectious Disease](#)

Applications open mid-Nov with deadline of 16 January 2024

Charity funded programmes

[Wellcome](#) – large source of grant funding.

[Wellcome Sanger Institute](#) – clinical and non-clinical PhD programmes, deadline 28 November 2023 for non-clinical. Clinical programme closed 2 November 2023.

Cancer Research UK – eg [Institute of Cancer Research \(ICR\)](#) – deadlines in Nov/Dec 2023 depending on project proposal.



Some other programmes

Various options at [Imperial](#).

[Crick PhD Prog](#) -

- 4 year programme; UCL, Imperial, Kings, all nationalities, applications now closed for 2024.

[Heidelberg Institute for Global Health](#).

[DKFZ International PhD programme in Heidelberg](#), no deadlines: apply throughout the year.

[Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#) (offers PhD and DrPH).

Academic/Research Master's Degree

- 2 years;
- Complete a thesis;
- Can lead to doctoral study.

Doctoral Degree

- 4 – 6 years (subject & funding dependent);
- 2 years course work – oral & written qualifying exams;
- Doctoral Candidacy – 2/3 years dissertation research;
- At end, dissertation & oral exam 'Defense';

A key difference to UK: all degrees include research & taught components.

[Find out more from the Fulbright Commission.](#)

Collaborative Doctoral Studentships

- Carried out in collaboration with non-academic organisations ('industry');
- Contribute resource and intellectual support and mentoring for the project;
- 4 years, at least between 3 to 18 months 'on site';
- Commonly 'CASE' studentships.

Info:

- [UKRI on collaborative partnerships](#)
- [Examples from Oxford of Industrial CASE studentships \(iCASE\)](#)

Another option with a professional emphasis: [DrPH at LSHTM](#).

“The DrPH programme leads to a doctoral-level qualification and is intended for leaders and future leaders in public health.”

Key components:

- A taught component comprising two compulsory modules;
- Research Study I: an Organisational and Policy Analysis (OPA) project;
- Research Study II: a research project leading to the production of a thesis.

Requires relevant experience in areas of public health policy, management and/or leadership.

Application deadline 31 January each year, to start in Autumn term.

Applying to specific project.

Where to look:

[FindaPhD.com](https://findaphd.com), use the advice and funding sections too;
[Jobs.ac.uk](https://jobs.ac.uk).

When? More all year round than programmes offered by DTPs.

Questions to consider

- How good are the facilities?
- What is the research reputation of the group / department (REF)?
- Will I get formal training? – techniques, seminars;
- What topic would I like to research?
- What useful research skills will I develop?
- Are department systems in place if I need help?

Advice from postdoc researcher:

Find a research area that you really enjoy and choose wisely when picking a supervisor and PhD programme.

Key qualities of good supervisor:

- Approachable, available, amenable.

What if you don't have particular area of interest?

Quotes from a previous Academic Careers Forum

KM – you can concentrate on particular methods rather than specific disease area. I use electronic health records whatever the disease area. It is more fun if you're interested in it!

JC – I use molecular microbiology techniques – they are applicable globally to many diseases.

But, there is no hurry to embark on a PhD.

‘Bespoke’ PhD – proposal + funding

Find Supervisor;
Submit research proposal;
Apply for PhD place – must meet academic requirements.

Find Funding:
Apply for host institution grants & bursaries (check deadlines);
Apply for funding from charitable awards (check deadlines);
[PhD student loan](#);
Part-time PhD & Research Assistant post (‘staff’ PhD option);
Period of work before embarking on PhD;
For international students – funding from home country;
Investigate potential sources of funding at least 12 months before the relevant academic year;
[Alternative guide to postgraduate funding](#).

Approaching potential supervisors

Guidance from UCL (useful for any university) on [how to contact potential supervisors](#).

- Have a clear idea of the problem you seek to study;
- Know the staff and their specific research interests – align your approach accordingly;
- Be flexible about other options for research;
- Research potential funding options.

Tips for grant applications/proposals

Those evaluating your proposal/application for money will look for:

- Your track record and your potential;
- A 'timely' research question (emphasise why now is the right time to address this question);
- Supporting pilot data which indicates the question is an important one to ask (but is only pilot data – e.g. the question has not yet been tackled fully);
- Indication that you are well set up to address the question (it will be feasible to collect data, it can be done within the time frame).
- Give clear project details which show you are the right person to tackle the question, the question is an important one, you are well set up to answer it.
- Make sure you meet the expectations of the funding organisation, be overt in referring to their aims and expectations.
- Be clear about the difference between aims and objectives in setting out your proposal:
 - Aims: the changes in knowledge that you want to achieve – your vision for the future.
 - Objectives: deliverables – activities you will perform to achieve the aim (aim for 3 objectives).

Identifying research groups and opportunities

Institutional Research Databases/information such as:

- [LSHTM Centres, Research Groups and Research Projects](#);
- [UCL Institutional Research Information Service](#);
- [Kings Research Portal](#);
- [UK Research and Innovation gateway](#).

Further resources for funding information:

- [The Alternative Guide To postgraduate funding](#);
- [FindAPhD.com – Funding section](#);
- [Postgraduate Funding Guide from Prospects](#);
- Host institution website.

What else is coming up?

Check Moodle [Forthcoming workshops and events](#), including:

- **Finding and funding a PhD (16th Nov, repeat of this session)**
- **PhD Applications (21st & 22nd Nov):** We will cover what academic supervisors look for and how to design and draft the documents you need to submit
- **Global & Public Health Careers, Alumni Panel (28th Nov)**
- **LinkedIn (12th & 13th Dec)**

We value your feedback

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oaKtcild7U6xIPh0V3cUnib6FT5JU2lKm1h1jmhk5TFUQ1NBQ1gyMkZNTedINjBKM0tjQjQ3MINTSy4u>

Please complete
the feedback
form – the link is
in the chat box!

And now let's
move to your
questions.....

