

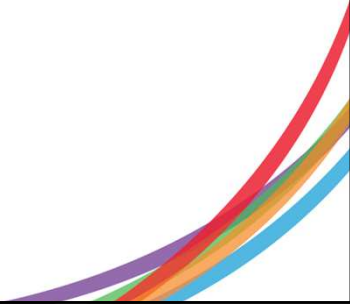
Thinking of Doing a PhD?

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1pm
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CLM 3.02

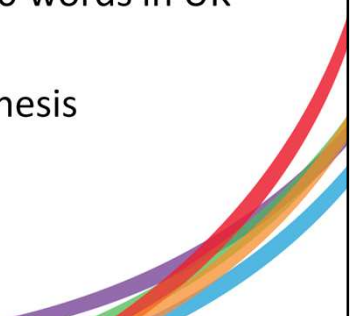


Today's programme

- **Why** do a PhD?
- **Where** and **When** to study?
- The application process
- Resources and support



What is a PhD?

- 3-4 years (5/6 years US) of independent and original research
 - Supervised by an academic(s) in the subject area(s)
 - Fieldwork, archival research, experiments (plus courses in the US)
 - Writing a thesis – normally c. 100,000 words in UK (approx 60, 000 US)
 - *Viva voce* oral exam or ‘defence’ of thesis
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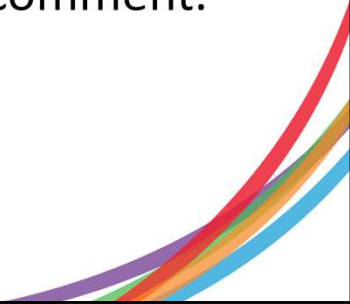
3-4 years is standard **UK** length – number of years will differ in other countries, where original dissertation may come on the end of a longer academic programme including some taught courses, as in the US and some countries in Europe.

Overlapping of subjects in social sciences, e.g. transitional law; gender issues in development work

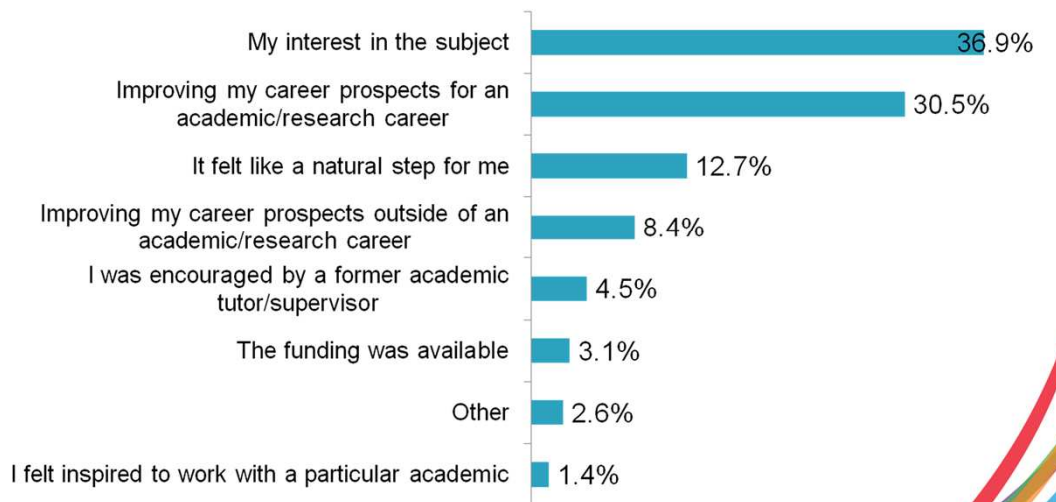
Why do a PhD?

In small groups, discuss some of your reasons for contemplating doing a PhD

Feedback to audience and comment.




Main motivations



<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/postgraduate/pres-reports>
PRES 2011: 97,571 students surveyed From 1 March until 17 May

Why not to do a PhD

- You can't think of anything else to do next
 - My master's dissertation went OK, so....
 - I don't want to get a job yet
 - There are no jobs out there
 - It's an easy way to spend 3 years
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Boredom is the worst reason in the world to do it

You need active passion

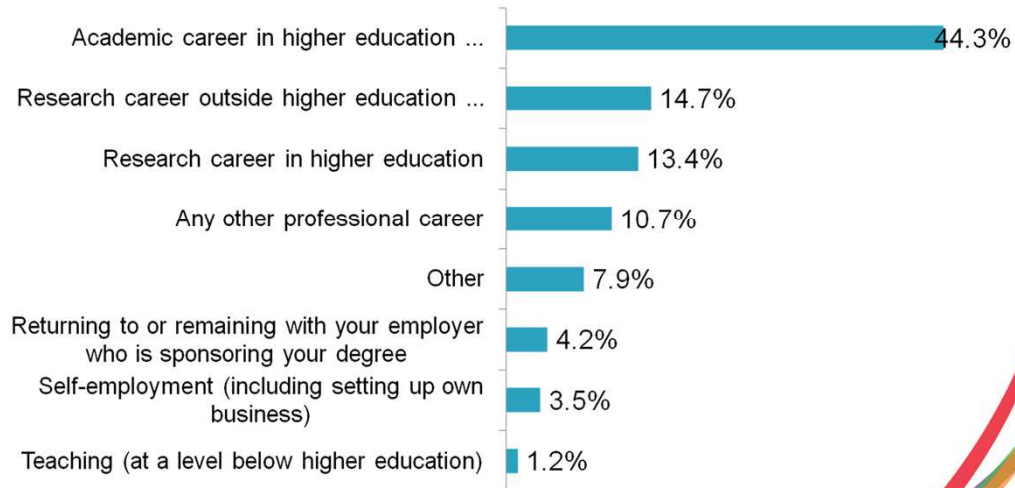
You also need a good subject area – extending your master's is unlikely to sustain you for 3 years unless you really had a good topic with potential for expansion, and your master's dissertation left you with a dozen unanswered questions about your research

Academic careers are also more effectively built on 2 research areas rather than one, so it's always useful to have a second research area that you are interested in

If you can't face the thought of knuckling down to a career just yet, then it's OK just to get a job and see how it goes. But a PhD should never be the answer. Avoid starting and not completing.

3 years is a long, long time when you're bored, miserable or bewildered.

PhDs anticipated type of career

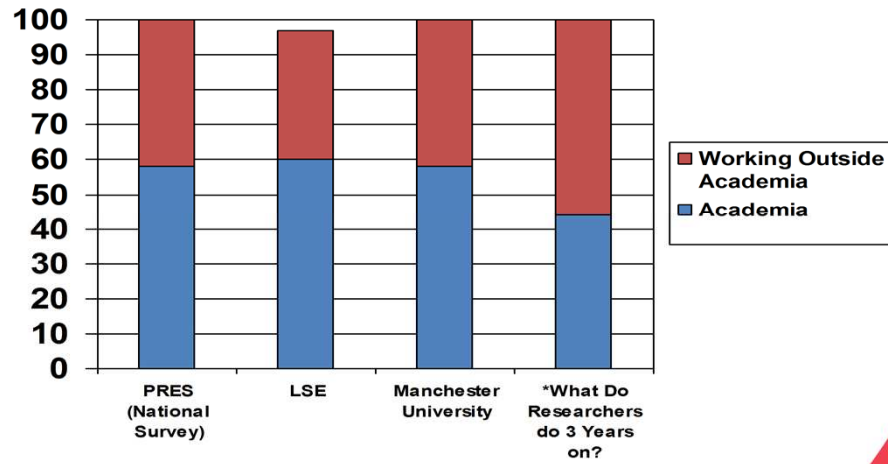


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PRES 2011: 97,571 students surveyed

From 1 March until 17 May

What do PhDs actually do 3 Years after Graduating?



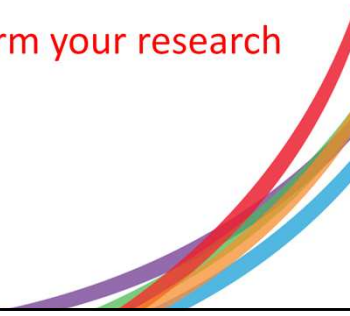
LSE Data from 2003 – 2007 (Sample size=131)
 Academic – Includes Lecturers/Professors/Fellows and 3% of people working in university administration/ academic support roles

* http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/WDRD_3_%20years_%20on_sch%20copy.pdf

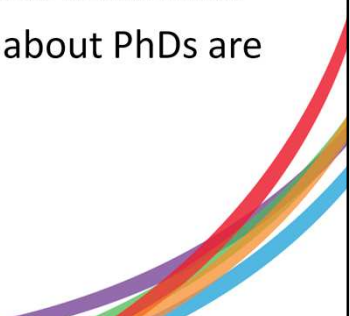
When should I do a PhD?

- Immediately after a Masters – *high intellectual and academic momentum*
- After first job – *time to reflect and think carefully about your reasons*
- Alongside a job, studying part time – *cross-pollination*

Would a 'real world' experience inform your research and give you intellectual maturity?



Considerations

- It can be lonely – working alone both physically and intellectually
 - Independent working can be a challenge. No clear short-term goals/measurable/tangible outcomes
 - Supervisor relationship is crucial
 - What's the point if don't want to go into academia?
 - Attitudes of non-academic recruiters about PhDs are varied
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Lots of non-department support at LSE through methodology institute, TLC and Careers but not all universities are the same.

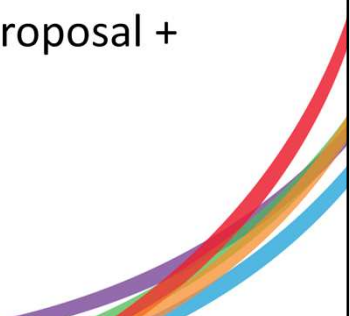
Independent working, formulating your own voice out of a mass of published material and evidence can be really hard. Finding that natural authority can be difficult. On the other hand, being the only expert in the world on something can be really, really exciting!

Varying input of supervisors – some directed, some not, some more influential than others

Have a look at the range of jobs that require a PhD or where the skills from a PhD may be useful.

Non-academic employers sometime have pre-conceived ideas about PhDs e.g. no real world experience, unable to write succinctly and clearly. It is up to you to provide evidence that proves this notion false.

Application Process Overview


1. Identify where to study (country, university, department)
 2. Identify potential PhD supervisors
 3. Timescales – work out deadlines
 4. Do you fulfil requirements?
 5. Application forms + research proposal + personal statement
 6. Funding
- 

Where to study?

Do your research first and choose
wisely

It may be easiest to stay at the LSE as you know the university, academics, environment etc. and the LSE is of course, a very prestigious University but do make sure that you make a pro-active choice about where to do your PhD rather than choosing a PhD 'be default' or with no active decision making involved.

Some tips.....

- Research your subject area
 - Course structure – UK, Euro or US model?
 - University culture – other relevant departments, PhD support courses
 - Departmental culture – size, seminars, methodology support, no. of PhD students
 - Academics whose work interests you
 - Support for fieldwork or archival research
- 

Know your subject area, e.g. Int Hist. devel studies, well enough to be able to work out where your research is going to lie in the subject. Particularly important if you are going to be working interdisciplinarily

Also which universities have departments or research groups which support your area through their UG or PG programmes?

Also try to find out how a potential department would support you logistically if you are going to be interdisciplinary and need two supervisors – who will look after you, will you have two supervisors or not?

TALK TO OTHER PHD STUDENTS AND FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES BEFORE YOU EMBARK ON A PHD. A Phd can last a long time so do your research thoroughly and choose wisely.

Approaches to finding a UK PhD

- Apply to university before deadlines!
 - university funds you – apply early (and be aware of nationality restrictions for some funding)
 - self-funding/organise your own funding
- Apply to advertised studentships
 - www.jobs.ac.uk
 - www.findaphd.com

LSE Careers Resources

Books: 'How to get a PhD' and 'PhD Application Handbook'

Approaches to finding a US PhD

Resources

[WWW.Petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) online directory

[LSE Careers](#) web pages on US graduate study
44,000 graduate programs listed in US and
Canada

Fulbright Commission

Awards for UK citizens (and others)

Applications open 1 August, close 6 November 2015

Also useful online information for everyone

<http://www.fulbright.org.uk/study-in-the-usa/postgraduate-study/applying>

Application Process: Choose your university

- Research the entry requirements for university/department in chosen country
- Research the academics and departments
- Ask your MSc supervisor for advice
- Talk to a graduate tutor in the department you are interested in
- Potential supervisors – to approach or not?

Check US entry requirements, for instance, which are complicated and extensive and will almost certainly include the GRE or GMAT

Speak to PhDs, postdocs, TAs etc. in the department if you can. Ask them what it is like to work there. Are they publishing well? Do they get support/time/inspiration from their supervisor/PI. Is your PI well-connected?

Approaching Supervisors? University websites may advise against but many academics will want an informal discussion with prospective PhD students.

Timescales

- Check specific deadlines early:
 - UK generally late spring but some like [LSE](#) on a rolling basis
 - Deadline for LSE scholarships is early January! [Econ in Dec]
 - US deadlines from Nov- March but need to have done GMAT/GRE etc earlier
- Before then allow time for :
 - Contacting supervisors and referees
 - Sorting entry requirements : GMAT/GRE, language
 - Developing research proposal
 - Time-consuming application procedures

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/graduate/enquirer/howToApply/deadlines.aspx>

19 October 2015 and you must apply early. Departments will consider these applications from 2 November 2015 and the first decisions will be released from January 2016 onwards.

Application Process: The Proposal

- Read other proposals first, if you can.
- Balance – detail vs. development of ideas
- Must show **originality, depth, scope, sense of context**
- Write a draft, get feedback from a tutor, then redraft!
- Accuracy is vital – spelling/punctuation
- Check institutional requirements, e.g. length, detail, bibliography
- LSE: 1,500 words

www.lse.ac.uk/study/graduate/enquirer/howToApply/completingYourApplication/home.aspx

Always useful to read other people's proposals – ask other PhD students if you can see theirs

Can be difficult to get a balance between a) providing enough detail to be specific and show the panel you know what you want to do, understand the subject area, understand the demands of 3 years of research; and b) conversely allow enough room for development of your ideas as you go along

Originality is key, but you need to demonstrate you understand how your work is going to fit with other work already done in the area, as well as key theoretical themes or significant pieces of fieldwork or analysis.

You may need to show you have done some relevant background reading, and know how your idea will fit with that in a relatively specific way.

Also you need to sustain 3 years of research so there has to be enough to do!

Get academic advice from your current tutor or the postgraduate tutor in your department. They will be used to seeing proposals and will be able to advise you on tone of voice, content, level of detail.


Accuracy is so important – it is a mini-mirror for a potential supervisor to evaluate you, your research, and how seriously you take your work, including attention to detail

Lastly check the institutional requirements for the proposal, e.g. how long it should be, also what level of preparation they expect you to have done.

LSE states:

please state your proposed research topic as accurately as possible using the format outlined on the application form. Give a brief synopsis of your research proposal and details of publications and any other research experience and/or relevant preliminary reading you have undertaken. Please also state whether you have discussed your proposed research topic with a member of the academic staff at LSE and the name of that person. There is no fixed word limit but in general your statement should be 2-3 typed A4 sides.

What's in a research proposal?

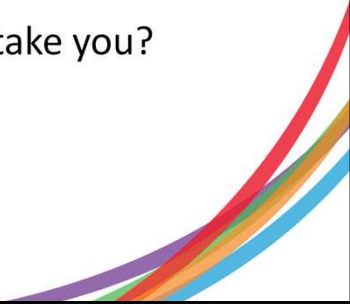
- What is your general topic?
 - What questions do you want to answer?
 - What is the key literature and its limitations?
 - What are the main hypotheses of the work?
 - What methodology do you intend to use?
 - What are your case studies, if any, and what are your case selection criteria?
 - 1,500 words.
- 

Motivation;


Right project; right place; right supervisor. Where it is leading you career-wise

Application Process: Personal Statement


- Can be hard to write
- Usually separate from your research proposal
- Convey:
 - Relevant experience of research activity
 - Contextual knowledge of subject area
 - Sense of direction – where will it take you?
 - Passion



Personal Statement: What goes in it?

- Why you want to do postgraduate study/research
 - Reasons for wanting to study at this particular university
 - The courses available to you explaining which you are relevant to you and why
 - Your practical or academic experience relating to the topic and/or the career it may lead to?
 - Skills you have to make the transition to and be successful in your research?
- 

Application Process: Funding

- Start with the department/university first
 - Research proposal usually needed
 - Joint application with supervisor/institution
- 
- A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner of the slide, consisting of several overlapping, curved lines in red, orange, yellow, and blue, creating a sense of movement and energy.

Find out from your tutor or prospective department where grants for your subject area normally come from.

Some departments will have scholarships for which you will be considered on application – again check individual rules

Grants available from a range of organisations, not just the large bodies like the ESRC in the UK. If you want to study outside the UK, contact prospective department to find out how their students are funded.

Grants Directory is an annual publication listing grants from all over the world in all academic categories. Also, there are often eligibility criteria such as nationality, tied to particular countries or groups of countries, e.g. Armenia, or the Commonwealth, or Latin America or Caribbean. Look into what is available for you.

You will usually need to submit your research proposal, either in its original version or a shorter version, as part of the application process. Check requirements carefully, and co-ordinate with your potential supervisor to make sure that they know what you are submitting

Often the grant bodies, e.g. ESRC will require a joint application between you and your supervisor to be submitted through the institution you are applying to. Make sure you know the deadlines, the procedures, and are clear on what order different stages of the process need to be done in.

Application Process: Funding

- **Grants available from:**
 - UK funding bodies - www.rcuk.ac.uk – Research Councils UK (ESRC, AHRC, NERC)
 - University scholarships/studentships
 - Charities, foundations and trusts
- **Online funding resources:**
 - Prospects PG Funding Guide – www.prospects.ac.uk/funding
 - <http://www.postgraduatestudentships.co.uk/>
 - <http://www.grantsonline.org.uk/>
- **LSE Careers Information:**
 - Grants Register 2010 – list of postgraduate awards world-wide by subject
 - The Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding (charity funding)

www2.lse.ac.uk/government/degreeProgrammes/fundingYourStudies.aspx

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School and External Funding Opportunities

You can find links below which will take to information about funding opportunities for MSc and Research Students.

Scholarships and Funding Opportunities for MSc Students

- [Graduate - Taught Programmes \(Home/EU Countries LSE Based Awards\)](#)
- [Graduate - Taught Programmes \(Overseas Countries LSE Based Awards\)](#)
- [Graduate - Taught Programmes \(Overseas Countries External Awards, including the British Council\)](#)
- [Generic MSc Scholarships \(including Economic and Social Research Council Quotas and Open Competition\)](#)

Scholarships and Funding Opportunities for Research Students

- [LSE PhD Scholarships](#)
- [LSE Research Studentship Scheme](#)
- [Graduate - Research Programmes \(Home/EU Countries LSE Based Awards\)](#)
- [Graduate - Research Programmes \(Overseas Countries LSE Based Awards\)](#)
- [Graduate - Research Programmes \(Overseas Countries External Awards\)](#)
- [Generic Research Scholarships \(including ESRC\)](#)

Departmental funding for PhD students

Research studentship awards

The Department has a small amount of funding available for the allocation of Research Studentship Awards, which can provide some assistance with fees or maintenance. In 2009/10 a total of 85 awards have been made on the basis of merit and need.

Research Awards are available to all full or part time Research students. All MPhil/PhD and MRes/PhD applicants who receive an offer of admission will be sent details on how to obtain the application form via a website link. Hard copies of the form can also be requested from the [Consular Support Office](#). To contact them email Finance.Support@lse.ac.uk. Continuing students will be sent the form by email in December.

Application forms must be returned to the [Finance Support Office](#). NOT the Government Department, before the deadline advertised on the [LSE Research Studentship Scheme](#) page (usually early June).

Put 'funding your studies' in the search box to find

Resources and Support

- **Careers website and blog**

www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/PostgraduateStudy/WantToDoAPhD.aspx

Includes section on postgraduate study in the US

- **Careers resources** e.g. books:

1. 'The PhD Application' Handbook by Peter J Bentley
2. 'How to Get a PhD' by Phillips and Pugh

- **People**

1. Your current master's supervisor
2. PhD students in your department
3. Fulbright Commission for US study