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by Adama

UK PhD Application Guide

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UK PhD Application Checklist

Where can you do it ?

- Local (same city) or Move
- Partner institutions
- Different country?

A longlist and shortlist of the places

- What do you like about these places and building your "why"

The interview process

- Interview structure
- Panel members
- Events about the programme
- Pre-interview tasks

Presentation of your work

- Present yourself
- Present your work (5-10 minutes)
- Answer questions related to your work and interests

Express your interest in unexpected places

- How fast can you get an application together?

Support system

- Friends / Family
- Online community
- Course mates
- Supervisor/ personal Tutor
- Mentor

References x 3

- Supervisor
- Personal Tutor
- Workplace Manager

Second opinion on personal statement

- Grammar and clarity
- Technical knowledge
- Knows you personally

Questions to expect at interview

- Your research interests
- Your research experience
- Why that programme
- How have you kept up with science in and outside your field

Dealing with nerves and the anxiety of the "wait"

- How to distract yourself
- Thinking of alternative career options that can be equally as fulfilling.

Deadline season

- Funded programs:September to Jan
- Rolling deadlines with funding
- Scholarships
- Self funded

Examples of successful personal statements

- Online
- Colleagues
- Peers
- Programme specific examples

Questions to ask at interview

- Course structure
- Internships
- Project specific skills
- Lab techniques
- Careers of past students

An up to date detailed academic CV

- Key research skills
- Courses and grades
- Research Experience
- Volunteering / Extra
- Work experience

What is your alternative?

- Try again
- Pursue a different path
- Keep applying for places that year ?

How did you know a PhD was for you ?

I knew my specific PhD would be for me because I found the project very interesting during learning more about it in the application process, but also because I was able to do a project that would serve to satisfy my scientific curiosity.

I didn't at first, but i fell into being a research assistant and realised i liked research, my supervisor at the time who later became a mentor asked if I had considered doing a PhD

I wanted to get the doctor title and was also quite young after doing my BSc and really wanted to get most of my studying out of the way before working. I also found a really great supervisor who helped guide me through and I think that's even more key than the subject you do your PhD in

I hadn't even heard of a PhD before the end of my 2nd year of my BSc when I was looking for summer lab projects to get more experience in the lab alongside my degree. I realised that I would need to get straight into a fully-funded PhD to continue my studies as I couldn't afford to do an MSc in between.

Dr Hodan Ibrahim
Medical Writer

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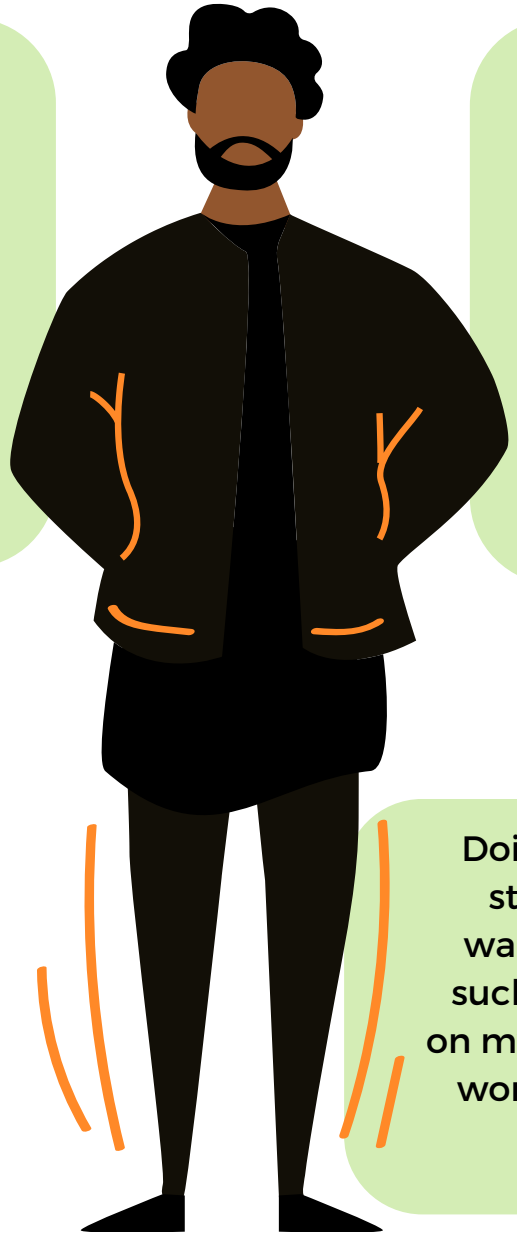
How did you know a PhD was for you ?

After an internship at the University of Uskudar in Istanbul Turkey, I did a master in research course which I thoroughly enjoyed, these two experiences helped make my mind up about a career in research and a PhD definitely had to be on the cards.

Jase - Phd Student



I was a lot more naive about PhDs than a lot of people going into them now. It felt like the right next step in my quest to get answers. One of my modules at university was on Hox genes and developmental biology, and that really appealed to me. I didn't apply for a lot of PhD programmes, just three that seemed like they had really interesting research labs.

Doing a PhD fitted into my "5 year plan" when I started my MSc because I knew I eventually wanted to do research, and a PhD is crucial for such a career. My interest in research was based on my general curiosity about the brain and how it worked so carrying on further research seemed like the obvious path to go down!.

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CV Example : Education

{University Name} Sept 2019-Dec 2020
MSc Medical Ultrasound (Echocardiography): {grade}

Dissertation {grade} : Speckle tracking Echocardiography: A retrospective study using precapillary pulmonary hypertensive patients.

Supervisor: {Name , Job title}

Abstract: In pulmonary hypertensive (PH) patients', right ventricular function has been identified as an important predictor in patient outcomes. This study hypothesized that right ventricle free wall longitudinal strain (RVFWLS) using 2D STE is a good independent predictor of outcomes: no event, clinical worsening, and death; in patients with PH. A single RVFWLS value could not be used to predict outcomes, but apical strain values were reduced in all patients regardless of outcome therefore identifying apical strain as a potential area of research focus in PH patients.

Key Modules and topics:

• Physics of ultrasound (x%): Transducers and Beam forming, B -mode images, Doppler Ultrasound, Blood flow, Colour flow, Advanced Imaging for flow and tissue motion, 3D Ultrasound, Contrast agents, Elastography, Quality Assurance, Safety in diagnostic ultrasound.

• Echocardiography (x%): Aortic disease, Pulmonary hypertension, valvular disease, right ventricle, ischemic disease, cardiomyopathy and heart failure, Strain imaging, 3D imaging, contrast and stress imaging, congenital heart disease.

• Clinical Studies (Echocardiography) (x%): Logbook scans completed to British Society of Echocardiography reporting standard: N=48 patients: Left ventricular dysfunction, valve disease and replacement, pulmonary hypertension, Aortic disease,
Cardiomyopathy and Normal cases.

CV Example : Work Experience

Research Technician, University College London — Sep 2020 – Date
Group Lead: { Name : Job Title}

Relevant projects:

- Surgical models of myocardial infarction: Longitudinally following mice with permanent ligation, 45 and 60-mins reperfusion injury for up to 12 weeks using, Ultrasound (B-mode 2D strain and 4D imaging protocols) and MRI.
- Photoacoustic Imaging: Pilot study to investigate tissue oxygenation in a mouse model of permanent infarction.
- Testing viability of shape memory patch implantation with cardiac cells on the heart: Indium labelled cell loaded patch onto naiive mice and followed with SPECT, Bioluminescence Imaging.

Administrative duties:

- Ordering and maintaining lab supplies.
- Training of new staff.
- Care of animals.
- Maintaining accurate records of experimental work.
- Ensuring compliance of health and safety regulations and maintain stock levels.

CV Example : Skills

• **Imaging:** Acquire and analyse biomedical imaging data: Ultrasound (4D and photoacoustic), SPECT, MRI, Bioluminescence imaging.

• **Laboratory skills:** surgical models of myocardial infarction, histology of heart tissue and staining, TTC staining, Immunohistochemistry, Western blotting stem cell cultures (heart tissues), Animal handling (mice and rats).

• **Procedures:** Tail vein injections, intubation (invasive & non-invasive), microsurgeries, US guided cardiac injections

• Home Office personal animal license PIL, A, B, C (Valid till 2025)

• **Grant writing**: NC3R (studentship) and British Heart Foundation (fellowship).

• **Practices:** Good clinical practice, confidential data handling, following standard operating procedures.

• **Coding and Analysis**: Python (Beginners), STATA (Advanced), MATLAB (Fundamentals), Visual sonics Vevo system, Graph Pad Prism.

• Clinical Echocardiography in Humans (British Society of Echocardiography Standard)

Dealing with Rejection: that email...

Dear Adama,

Thank you for your application and attending the interview for the programme

After careful consideration, I regret to inform you that you have not been successful in obtaining a place on the programme. Whilst you met the interview requirements, applications are considered in a highly competitive environment. We received many applications this year and due to the competition for a limited number of places, we have had to disappoint many excellent candidates.

I am sorry to send disappointing news. May I take this opportunity to wish you every success with future applications.

Best wishes,
{my biggest hater}

Let's be a grown up and get some specific feedback !

Dear {my biggest hater}

Thank you for your email and the opportunity to interview for the programme. At this stage is there more specific feedback that could be given to me?

If not, I completely understand and thank you for your time .

Disclaimer { my biggest hater} is a joke ! You have to deal with rejection somehow and that's how I felt at the time

Dealing with Rejection: the response

If I could provide some feedback and maybe { other hater} can as well ....

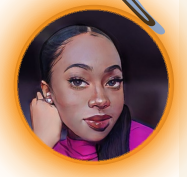
Firstly, we should mention that this was one of the best set of candidates we have interviewed for this research theme and so the competition was fierce.

We were really impressed by your current achievements to-date and your thoughtful responses to our interview questions – you performed particularly strongly in this section of the interview. I personally liked your analogy of going down the rabbit hole with a project that you can call your own; frequently this is what a PhD project is like. You are an excellent communicator, and your previous sci comms experience was evident. Following your presentation and follow-on questions, however, the panel was left unsure of your specific project and your scientific contribution to the work being performed .

Rather than a general overview of the different imaging techniques being employed, describing a focused hypothesis-based piece of work that you have undertaken that illustrated your technical capabilities would have been beneficial. We also felt that in the paper critique some of the fundamental understanding We were looking for detailed understanding of the mechanisms that were being investigated. Additionally, your summary of the paper could have been slightly tighter. We were in no doubt of your passion for research, but for future interviews I would also spend as much time convincing the panel the depth of your knowledge.

I hope this feedback is helpful and I wish you all the best . Please do consider reapplying to the DTP next year if you are unable to secure a place this year.

The paper was outside my comfort zone and did find quite difficult even with help



I wish they had just asked me ....

Reapplying wasn't in the cards for me . It was this time or move onto something else

The Process Summarised

PhD applications take a considerable amount of time ! Many people will spend at least 6 months to a year building the relationships that will help them get into their desired programme. This can be through courses, networking, building academic connections and researching different areas of research and programmes most interested in.

- Pre-application workshops or information webinars
- Preparing the application (CV, personal statement, references)
- Deadlines
- Pre-interview tasks : presentations, article preparation, interview cohort presentations/ webinars, meeting potential supervisors form listed projects
- The Interview
- Accepting/ rejecting places and deadlines.

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