


# Thinking of Doing a PhD?

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Michelmas Term 2016

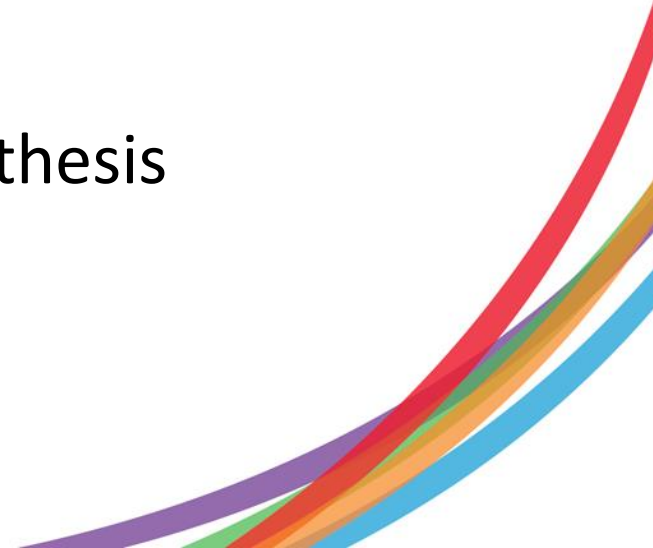
[www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/home.aspx](http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/home.aspx)



# Today's programme

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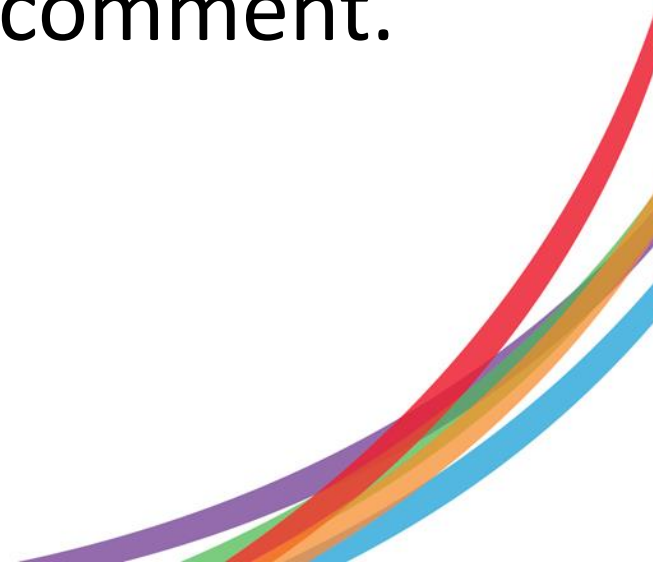
# What is a PhD?

- 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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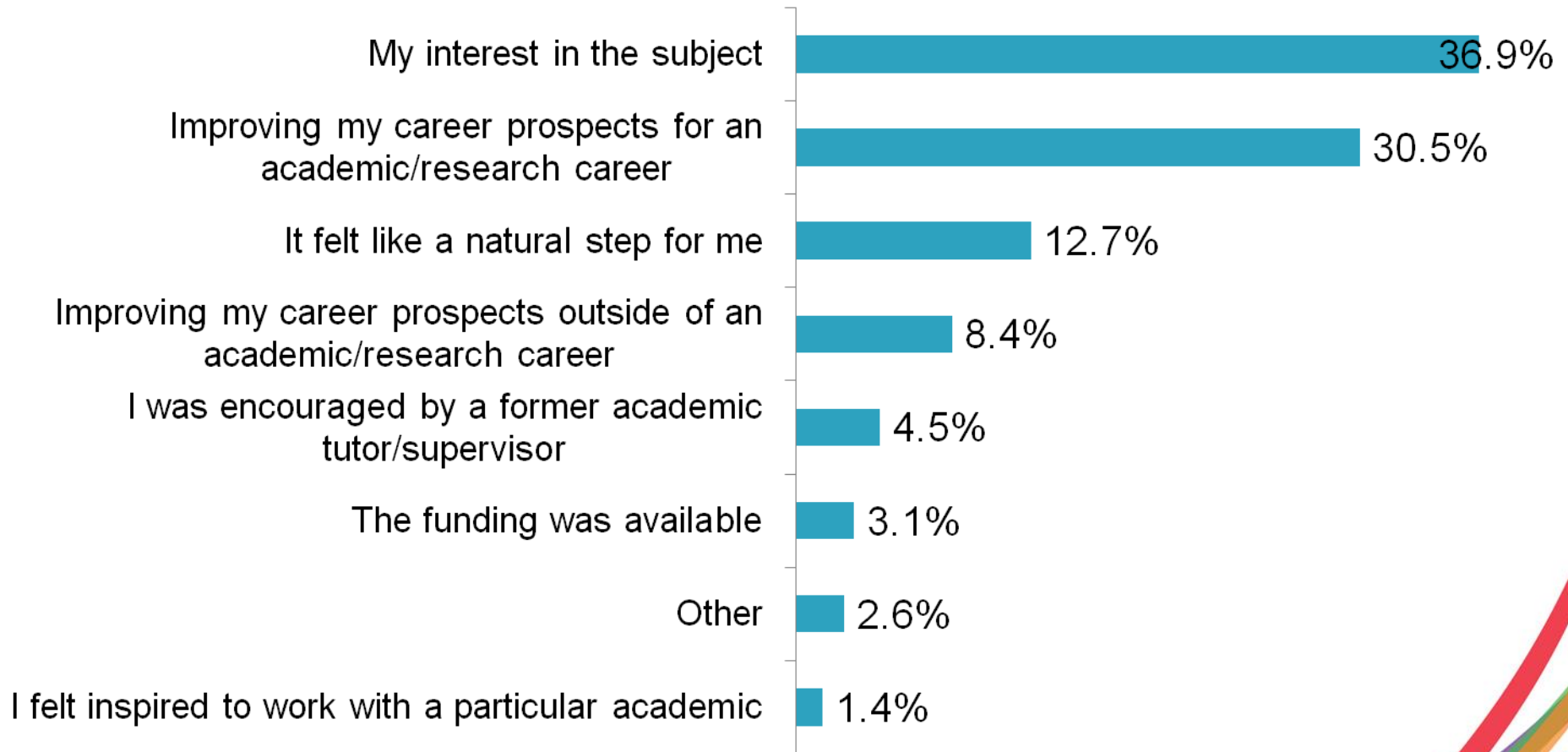
# Why do a PhD?

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

Feedback to audience and comment.



# Main motivations

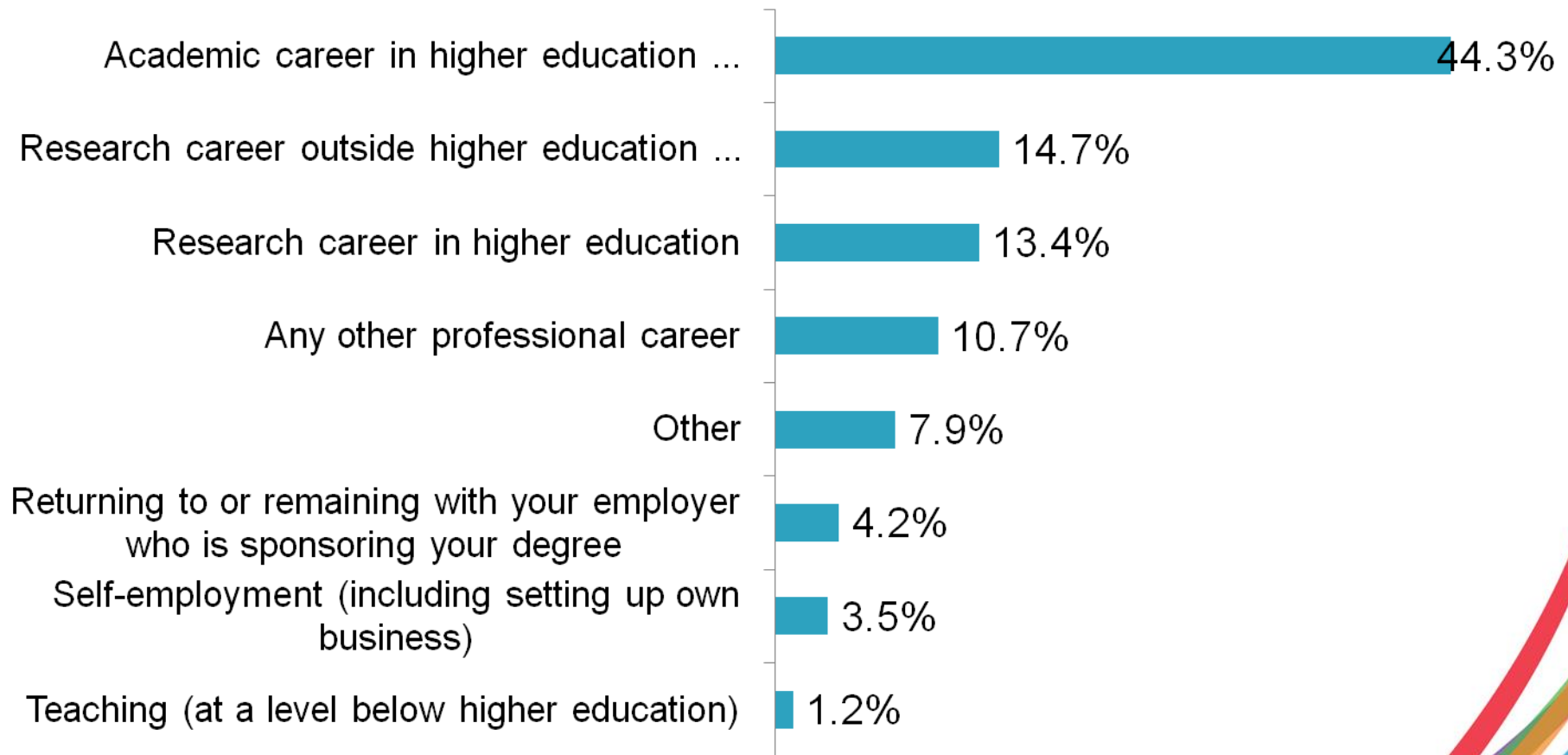


# Why not to do a PhD

- 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



# PhDs anticipated type of career

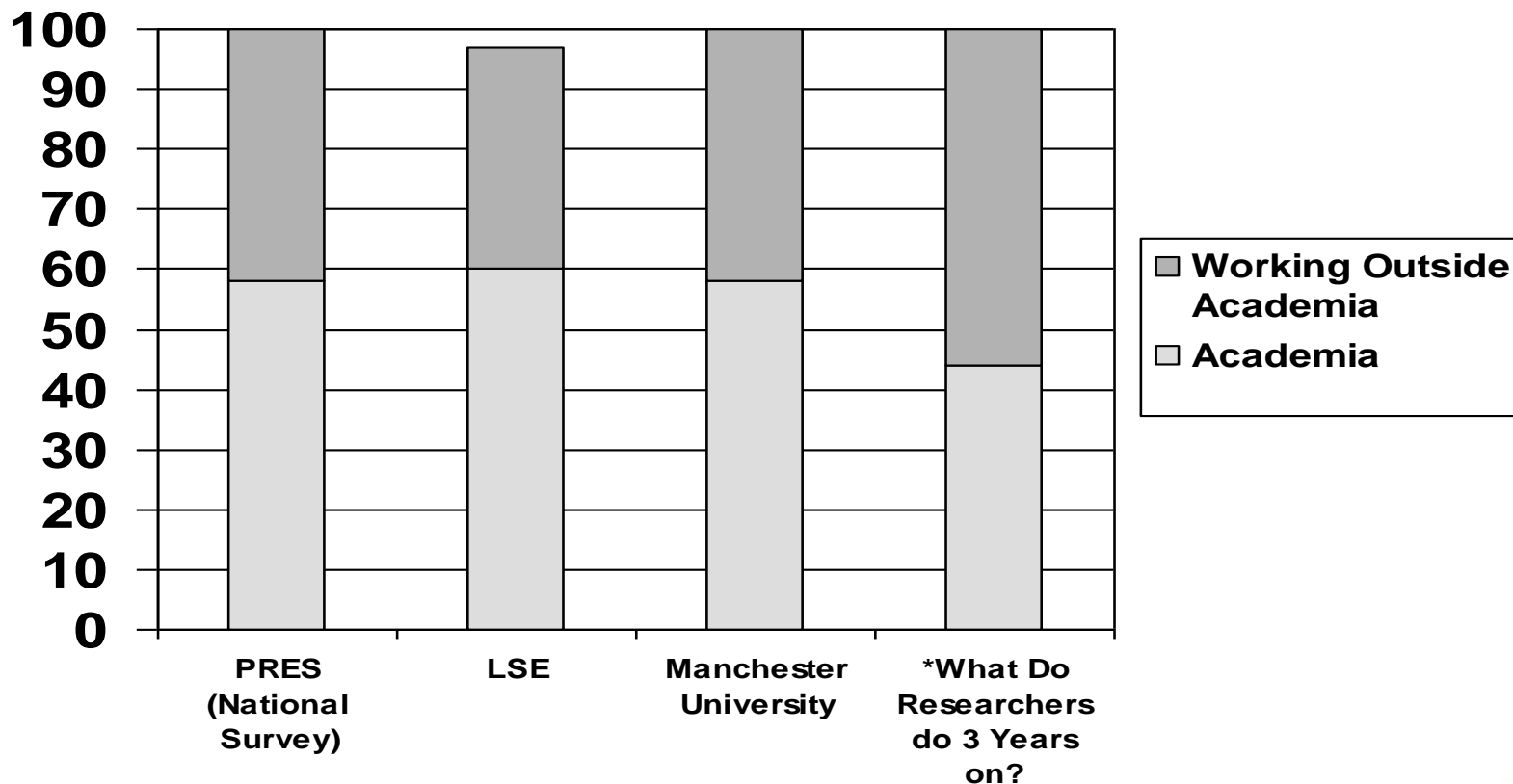


<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/postgraduate/pres-reports>

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\\_soft%20copy.pdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/WDRD_3_%20years_%20on_soft%20copy.pdf)



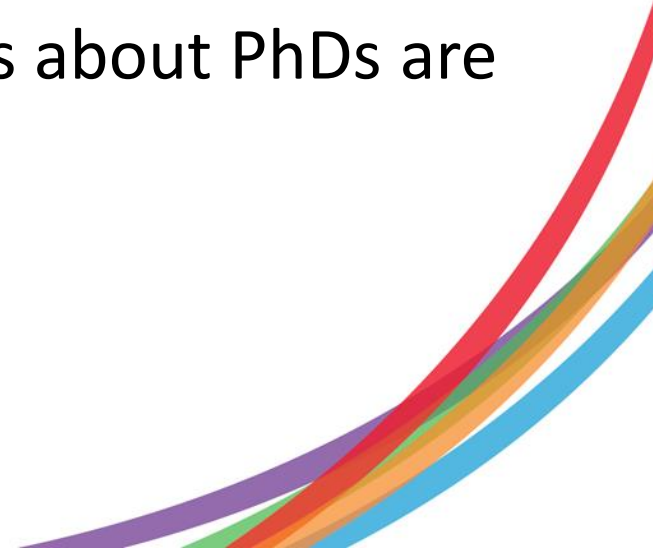
# When should I do a PhD?

- 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*

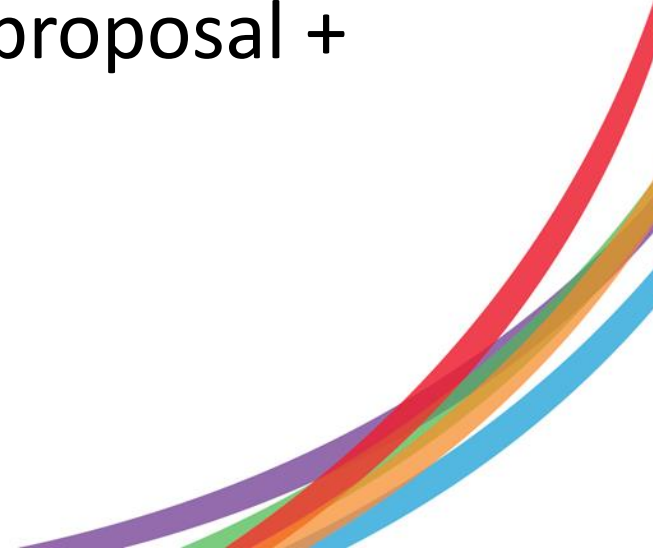
Would a 'real world' experience inform your research and give you intellectual maturity



# 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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# Application Process Overview

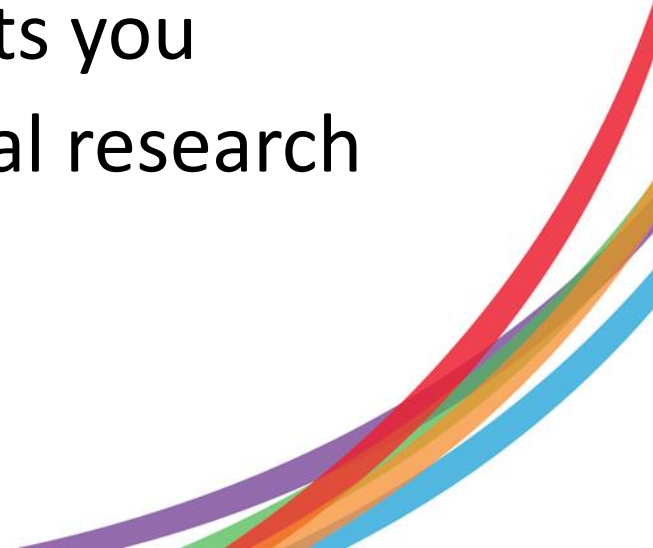
1. Identify where to study (country, university, department)
  2. Identify potential PhD supervisors
  3. Timescales – work out deadlines
  4. Do you fulfil requirements?
  5. Application forms + research proposal + personal statement
  6. Funding
- 

# Where to study?

Do your research first and choose  
wisely



# 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
- 

# Approaches to finding a UK PhD

- Apply to university
  - university funds you – apply early
  - self-funding/organise your own funding
  - deadlines, your own project
- Apply to advertised studentships
  - [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)
  - [www.findaphd.com](http://www.findaphd.com)
  - all year round, work on specific project

Nationality restrictions exist for some funding



# Approaches to finding a US PhD

## **Fulbright Commission**

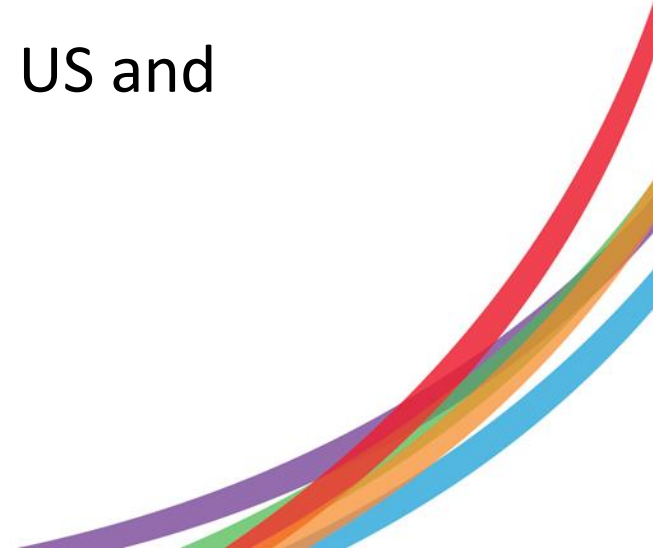
Awards for UK citizens

Applications open 1 August, close 6 November


Also useful online information for everyone

## **Petersons.com**

44000 graduate programs listed in US and  
Canada




# 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?
- 




# Timescales

- Check specific deadlines early:
    - UK generally late spring but some like LSE on a rolling basis
    - Deadline for LSE scholarships is early January!!
    - 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
- 

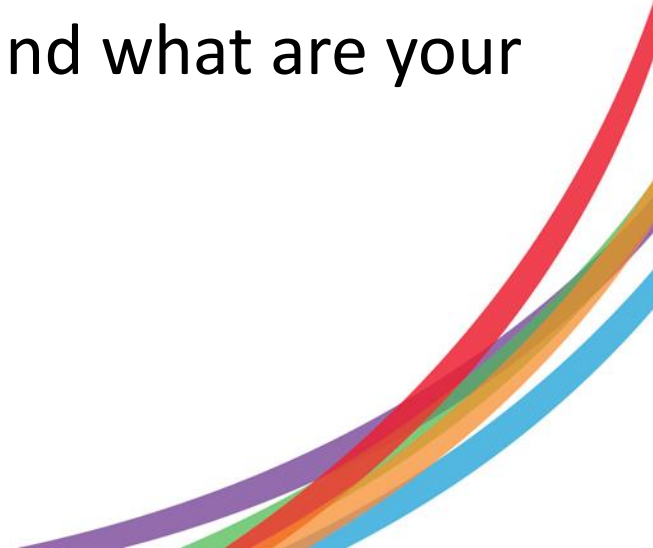
# Application Process: The Proposal

- 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


[www.lse.ac.uk/study/graduate/enquirer/howToApply/completingYourApplication/home.aspx](http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/graduate/enquirer/howToApply/completingYourApplication/home.aspx)




# What type of things go 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.
- 

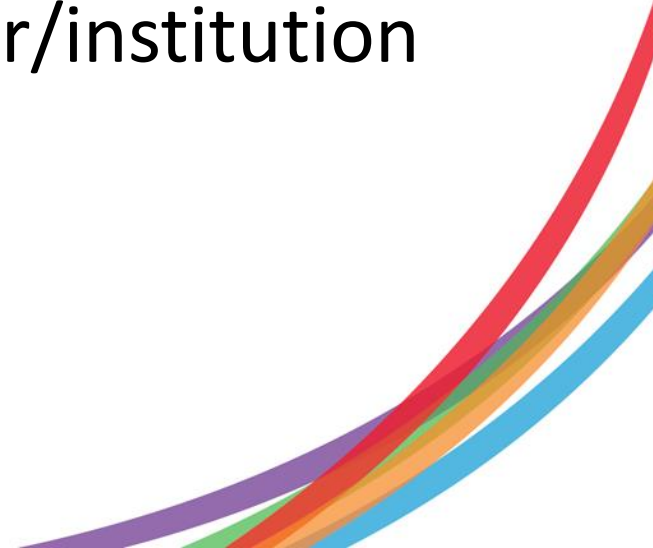
# Application Process: Personal Statement

- 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
- 

# Application Process: Funding

- **Grants available from:**
  - UK funding bodies - [www.rcuk.ac.uk](http://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.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)

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## Funding your studies

- [School and External Funding Opportunities](#)
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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 [Financial Support Office](#). To contact them email [Financial-Support@lse.ac.uk](mailto:Financial-Support@lse.ac.uk). Continuing students will be sent the form by email in December.

*Application forms must be returned to the [Financial 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

- **Career Service website and Blog**

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/PostgraduateStudy/WantToDoAPhD.aspx>

Includes section on postgraduate study in the US

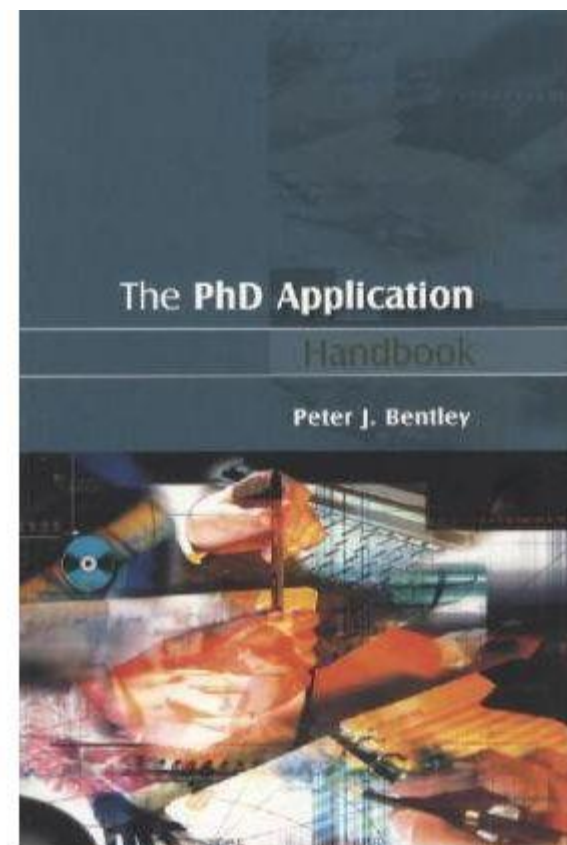
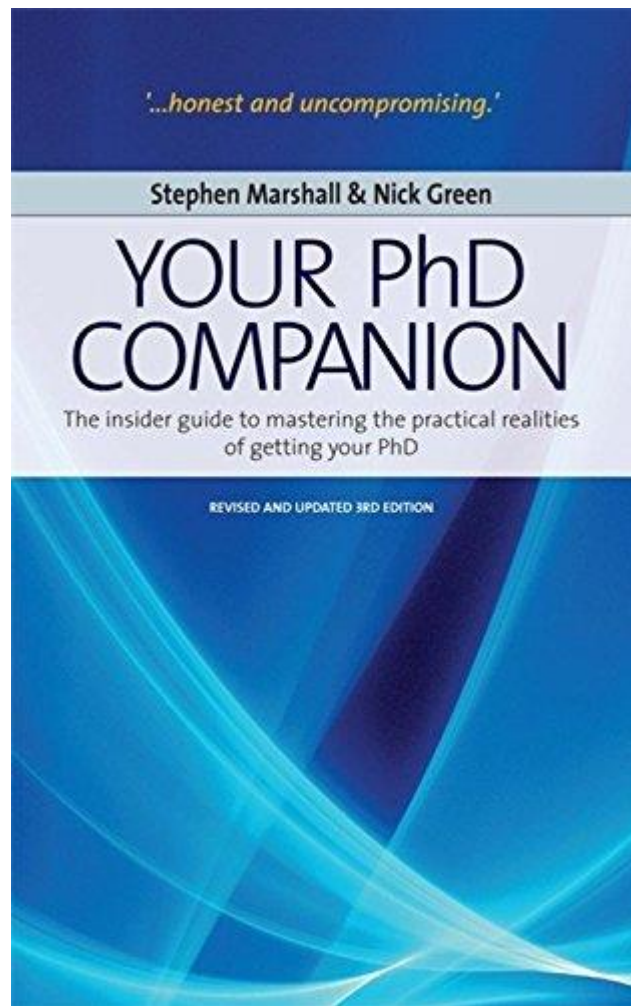
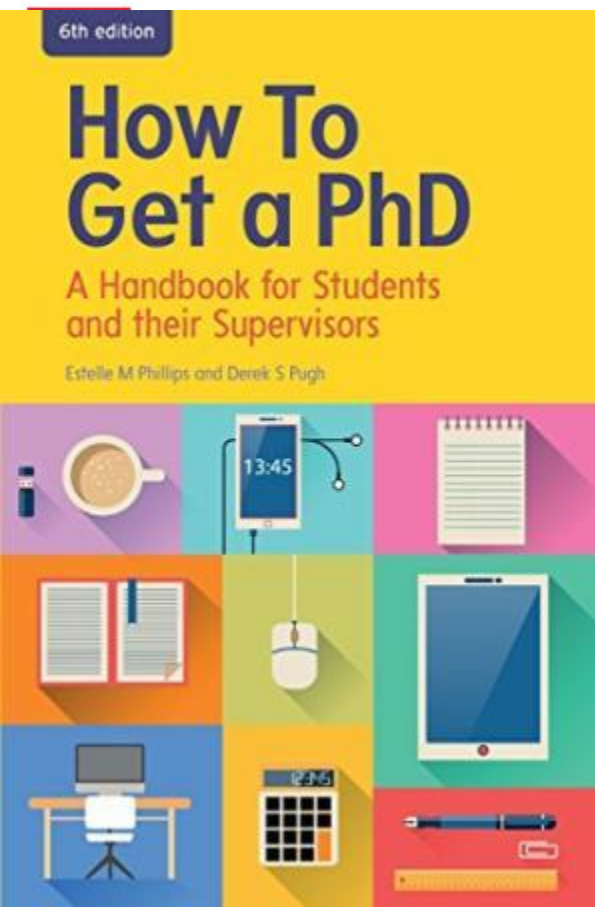
- **Careers Library Resources** e.g. books:

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





Books for reference in the  
LSE Careers resource centre