

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

GUIDANCE FOR PROSPECTIVE PHD STUDENTS

PHD STUDENTSHIPS

Our research attracts a wide range of funding and each year we invite candidates to apply for PhD studentships which are awarded on a competitive basis. Information about PhD studentships is provided on the [Department of Biological Sciences](#) website. Please note that funded PhD studentships are subject to application deadlines and only full time applicants will be considered.

Applicants for funded PhD studentships must be able to satisfy specific eligibility requirements in relation to qualifications and residency, and these will be specified in the entry criteria for each programme. Successful candidates for PhD studentships are usually able to demonstrate that they have excellent skills and qualifications in relation to the proposed PhD research, and are usually able to demonstrate an existing commitment to research.

If you are applying for an external studentship or scholarship, or if you have already secured funding, please contact the [Research Office](#) Team Leader to discuss your application.

IDENTIFYING A POTENTIAL PHD RESEARCH AREA AND SUPERVISOR

MPhil/PhD students can study for research degrees in the following areas:

- Biophysics
- Cell Biology
- Chemical Biology
- Computational Biology
- Microbiology
- Structural Biology

If you have already identified a potential PhD supervisor and discussed potential research projects with them, please include an agreed research proposal when you submit your application.

Otherwise, you must identify up to three academic staff members that you are interested in working with, together with a supporting statement to highlight which of their research areas particularly interest you and how they correlate with your research background and interests. You must provide this information in order for your application to be considered.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Before applying you should consider the following:

- Whether you meet the entry and eligibility requirements for PhD study within the Department of Biological Sciences. Entry requirements are available on the [Birkbeck prospectus](#).
- Whether you would like to pursue your PhD studies full time or part time
- The [research area](#) you are particularly interested in
- Your [potential PhD supervisor](#)
- How you plan to fund your PhD studies

How to apply: you will need to submit an online postgraduate application form, available on the [Birkbeck prospectus](#). When you complete the application form please refer to the guidance below.

COMPLETING THE ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

In the 'Supporting Statement' section

Provide details of your proposed supervisor and research project. If you have not yet identified a potential supervisor you can include the names of up to three academic staff, and identify which of their research areas particularly interest you.

In the 'Finance' section

If you are applying for one of the funded PhD studentships that we have available please state this here. If you are applying for an external source of funding (e.g. Commonwealth Scholarships), being sponsored by your employer, or plan to fund your own studies please state this here.

Proposed start date

Please include the date you are seeking to begin your PhD studies. PhD students may begin their PhD studies in October, January, or April each year.

References

You must include details of your referees and provide references.

Research Proposal

If you have already identified a potential PhD supervisor and discussed potential research projects with them, please include an agreed research proposal

Please submit an outline of your research background and interests, and how they correlate with your potential supervisor rather than a research proposal.

[The PhD Graduate Committee](#) will consider your completed application. If you are invited for an interview you should be prepared to discuss your suitability for PhD studies in general as well as your interest in your chosen subject. Interviews last up to 30 minutes and are usually carried out by at least two members of the Committee. Confidential references will be required before a decision is made about whether to invite you to attend a PhD interview.

USEFUL LINKS

[Student Services](#)

- [Fees and payment](#)
- [Financial Support](#)
- [Graduate Research School](#)
 - [Applying for an MPhil/PhD degree](#)
 - [Research student progression and assessment](#)
- [International Students](#)
 - [Entry requirements and how to apply](#)
 - [Visa information](#)
 - [Accommodation](#)

[Department of Biological Sciences](#)

- [MPhil/PhD research degrees](#)
- [Academic Staff](#)

FEES 2018/19

Part-time home/EU students:	£2,260 pa
Full-time home/EU students:	£4,260 pa
Part-time international students:	£6,225 pa
Full-time international students:	£12,325 pa

For lab based projects we normally charge a bench fee of £5,000 pa.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much does it cost to live in London?

Funding of at least £12,000 per year will be required, in addition to tuition fees, to cover living costs including accommodation, food, and travel within London.

Is it possible to study specifically for an MPhil?

No. At present all students are initially registered as MPhil and transfer to a PhD degree is dependent on a formal assessment of their progress, usually in the second year of studies for full time students.

When will I know if my application has been successful?

Unfortunately we are not able to provide feedback to individual students who are unsuccessful in applying for a PhD due to the volume of applications that we receive. In the case of applications for PhD studentships invitations to attend interview are usually sent to those who are successful in being shortlisted within about two weeks of the closing date for applications.

How will I be assessed as a PhD student?

Details of the assessment process will be provided at the beginning of your studies and will include a schedule of targets in order for you to submit your thesis within a maximum of four years full time study or seven years for part time study. PhD students are assigned a Thesis Committee which includes a principal supervisor, a second supervisor and a thesis chair. Your progress as a research student will be assessed through a combination of written assignments, oral and poster presentations, vivas and reports from your thesis committee.

How can I tell whether I am eligible?

Eligibility requirements vary depending on the source of funding. Please check the specific eligibility requirements for the [PhD studentship](#) you are interested in.

Can EU students apply for Research Council funded studentships (e.g. MRC or BBSRC) if they have not lived in the UK for three years prior to beginning their PhD studies?

Yes, but EU students in this situation will only be eligible for a fees-only studentship. Fees-only studentships provide course fees but do not include a stipend, or additional funding for lab consumables, travel, or conference funds. Potential applicants in this situation are encouraged to apply as there are sometimes alternative sources of funding for competitive students.

How long does it take to study for a PhD?

Full time PhD students must submit their thesis within four years of enrolment. The usual period of study for a full time PhD is between three and four years.

Part time PhD students must submit their thesis within a maximum of seven years of enrolment. PhD students who are studying part time usually aim to complete their thesis within four or five years. Before applying to study for a PhD part time, please consider your availability during the week, as this may determine whether a lab-based project is possible. Please note, it is not usually possible to consider part time applications from overseas applicants