WHAT IS A PhD

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UCL CAREERS
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What we will cover

- What doing a PhD involves
- Motivation for doing a PhD
- Possible benefits
- How to find a right PhD
Most well known research qualification is **PhD** (or **DPhil**)

PhD - either after first degree or masters

Usually require first class or good upper second class degree and/or Master degree

In UK generally lasts 3 years; increasingly 4-year programmes

Some PhDs – taught element

Many institutions, begin as MPhil then transfer to PhD

Doctorates with substantial taught core available in some vocations – **Professional Doctorates**, e.g. Engineering (EngD), Social Sciences (DSocSci), Business (DBA), Education (EdD), Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)…

Part-time PhDs possible – 5 or 6 years
What is a PhD?

- A novel, in-depth study of specific field
- Results in written report as Thesis or Dissertation (length varies across subjects; in science average 40,000-50,000 words, in humanities/social science about 80,000 words)
- Oral examination, with 2+ experts (‘Viva’) follows submission
- Work closely with one, or more, experienced researchers (PhD supervisors)
- Most in Universities
- Non-academic institutions (incl. industry, research institutes, cultural heritage organisations…) – some have collaborations with academia, e.g. CASE Awards
Why to do a PhD?

- Personal intellectual quest?
- Licence to teach in higher education?
- Apprenticeship in academia?
- 3-4 years of research experience?

In any case, you are expected to be able to operate as an independent researcher by the end of the entire process.
Wrong reasons to do a PhD

- Peer pressure
- Fulfilling the ambitions of others
- Rebelling
- Misplaced genius complex
- Insecurity
- Keeping your visa
- Not really wanting to enter the job market yet
Possible benefits

- Allows entry to some professions:
  - Academic Career, Research Scientist

- Other research careers - can be an advantage and/or allows entry to senior research positions, e.g. policy or cultural work, adviser roles within think tanks, curator in specific collections

- Other benefits - greater credibility, deeper knowledge, developed skills, more experience, wider contacts, international flexibility
Destinations of 2012/13 UCL Doctoral Graduates

TOP 5 OCCUPATIONS (57%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University researchers</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education teaching professionals</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers n.e.c.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical practitioners</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical psychologists</td>
<td>26</td>
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OTHER OCCUPATIONS (38%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biochemists, medical scientists</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health professionals n.e.c.</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance and investment analysts and advisers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory technicians</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors, writers and translators</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance and regulatory professionals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists, newspaper and periodical editors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmers and software development professionals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief executives and senior officials</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5% FURTHER STUDY!

39% stated their occupation as ‘Researcher’
Doctoral Graduates destinations: Further resources

‘What do researchers do?’


- series of publications exploring the destinations and career paths of doctoral graduates

**Video case studies** from doctoral graduates working in various academic and non-academic roles

- [www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/specialistsupport/researchers/videos](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/specialistsupport/researchers/videos)
- [www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/researcher-career-stories](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/researcher-career-stories)
Academic Career Path (UK)

- **PhD**
  - Postdoctoral Researcher (Associate)
  - Postdoctoral Researcher (Fellowship)
  - Temporary Positions

- **Research Grants Teaching Admin**
- ‘Tenured’ Positions
  - Professorial Chair
  - Senior Lecturer/Reader
  - Lecturer (e.g. Grade A, B etc.)
  - Probationary Lectureship
Academic career paths: Europe and beyond

European Academic Career Maps – LERU

- Different research positions available in an institution & levels of responsibility
- What funding at each stage
- How to progress from one level to the next.
- Countries covered: *Belgium (Flanders), Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, UK*

Academic careers in EU and beyond – EUI (European University Institute)

- [www.eui.eu/ProgrammesAndFellowships/AcademicCareersObservatory/AcademicCareersbyCountry/Index.aspx](http://www.eui.eu/ProgrammesAndFellowships/AcademicCareersObservatory/AcademicCareersbyCountry/Index.aspx)
- Details of academic careers in forty countries
Finding the right PhD: Questions to ask

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

Research Manager (Supervisor)
- Approachable?
- Available?
- Amenable?
Useful resources


www.findaphd.com/advice/
www.ucl.ac.uk/careers
Academic Career Planning & Management

www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk

• Video interviews with academics - various disciplines
• Overviews of various academic career paths
• Practical advice for academic applications & interviews