

Faculty of Laws
MPhil/PhD FAQs

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Entry Requirements

How do I find out whether I am eligible to apply for the UCL Laws PhD?

Our minimum entry requirements may be found in our Applying section. Note that the UCL Laws PhD Applications Team will pay particular attention to the elements of your undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that involved a dissertation or thesis.

We consider each application individually because we do not want to preclude candidates with high potential from applying. That said, the programme is highly competitive, we only accept between 10-12 new PhD students per year and there are multiple well qualified candidates for each place.

Should I have a master's degree to apply for the PhD?

While it is not strictly essential to have a master's degree to apply, it is strongly preferred. Entry to the programme is extremely competitive and the majority of students admitted onto the programme have a master's degree. This is because a master's degree helps to develop your academic ability and foster research skills necessary to undertake the extended research in the PhD.

If you do not have a master's/LLM, you must be able to demonstrate your research ability, usually through evidence of extended written work, and this would be an exceptional case. Note that an undergraduate dissertation would not usually be sufficient proof of this.

I'm currently studying a master's so do not have a transcript. What do I do?

We understand that applicants may be currently studying an LLM or master's degree while applying for the programme and therefore will not have a transcript. Please apply for the programme in the normal way, indicating that you are currently undertaking a master's degree. A transcript for your master's is not a pre-requisite for the application.

If you have received marks from your programme at the time of applying please note this on the application.

About the PhD Programme

Can I study the programme part-time?

Yes, you can study the programme part time. The part time option lasts 5 years with up to two additional years of Completing Research Status afterwards. Applications Team will pay particular attention to the elements of your undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that involved a dissertation or thesis.

Please note it is not possible to study the programme on a part-time basis if you require a [Tier 4 Visa](#).

Can I study the PhD programme via distance learning?

We do not accept applications to study the programme via distance learning. This is because on-site seminars and other work constitute an integral part of the programme.

Can I register as a PhD student instead of an MPhil at the start?

No. All successful applicants are initially registered for an MPhil degree. You must pass an assessment called an upgrade to be registered for a PhD. These are not two separate degrees, but distinct stages of the MPhil/PhD programme. This process ensures your work is of sufficient standard for a PhD. You cannot initially register just for an MPhil. You are expected to work towards the PhD.



Research Proposal & Identifying a Supervisor

How important is the research proposal?

A good research proposal is essential for a competitive application and you should put considerable thought and time into preparing it.

Bear in mind that a research degree is very different from a taught undergraduate or postgraduate degree. When assessing applications our team will not only be looking for evidence of your intellectual ability (e.g. as shown by previous degrees) but also evidence that you are well prepared to embark on a research programme.

Do I need to identify a potential supervisor?

Yes. Your application will be considered in the first instance by your proposed supervisor or a colleague in the same specialism. If you do not specify this on your application form, you will be asked to do so before your application is assessed.

If you are offered a place on our programme, your offer letter will indicate the prospective primary supervisor for your project. This will be an academic with expertise in your area, though it may not necessarily be the person whom you have contacted and/or who interviewed you.

How do I identify a potential supervisor?

You should look through the [Academic Staff](#) section of this website. By clicking through to individual academics' profiles, you will be able to see a breakdown of their research interests and publications.

You can also view our [Centres and Institutes](#), and look through our '[Windows on our work](#)' which highlights academic interests and specialisms.

I haven't heard back from my preferred supervisor. What should I do?

It is not essential to have heard back from a potential supervisor before you make an application. If you do not hear back, make the best decision you can with the information available to you and identify the person who appears best suited to your research.

However, if you have heard back from your preferred supervisor and they have told you that they are not able to supervise you then you should not submit an application.

Submitting Your Application & Outcomes

Can the deadline for applications be extended?

Unfortunately, we cannot accept late applications under any circumstances. In the interests of fairness, all applications must be considered at the same time.

Is there a deadline for my referees to submit their references?

Yes, the references must be submitted within 10 working days of the application closing date. It is your responsibility to ensure your referees do this. We strongly suggest you ask your referees to write your references early on in the process and let you know when this is done, so that you can monitor whether they have done this and remind them if necessary. Unfortunately we cannot consider applications without both references so please make absolutely sure your referees submit before their deadline.

What happens after I submit my application?

1. UCL notifies the Faculty of complete applications (September to November)
2. Applications sent to nominated supervisors to review (November)
3. Selected applicants are invited to interview (late November/early December)
4. Laws PhD Applications Team reviews all interview recommendations (mid-January)
5. Laws PhD Scholarship Team reviews all scholarship applications (mid-January)
6. Offers are made (late January)

Candidates will be notified in case completion of a Financial Information Form (FIF) is required.

Can you give me an update on my application?

Unfortunately, we cannot give updates on how your application is progressing as we receive a high volume of applications. We aim to notify all applicants of the outcome in late January/early February.

When will I be notified about the outcome of my application?

Applicants who are not selected for an interview will be notified of the outcome of their application between November and December.

Applicants who are selected for an interview will be notified of the outcome of their application between December and early February.

Your status on the online application system will reflect whether you have been made an offer and you can accept or decline it through this system.

Overseas applicants should not leave their own country for the purpose of attending UCL before receiving a formal offer of admission either directly from UCL or through their sponsoring authority.

Please note that we do not provide feedback to applicants who have been unsuccessful at the application stage and have not been selected for an interview.



Interviews

How should I prepare for my interview?

The following guidance is offered to all candidates in advance of their interviews:

“An important part of the interview is assessing whether candidates have given sufficient thought and preparation to the process of researching a sustained piece of original writing, equivalent to a sole-authored monograph, which is what a PhD in law is. So you need to think about how your work would engage with existing scholarship, and build on or differ from this literature in order to make a significant contribution to the subject.”