



APPLYING FOR A PHD: PROPOSAL WRITING AND FUNDING

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Introductions and welcome

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Thinking of applying for a PhD?

- What is a PhD in the UK?
- What are the key areas of a research proposal?
- Advice on writing competitive scholarship applications.



What is a PhD in the UK?

- Conducting original, in-depth research in an area of your own choice.
- Independent work under the guidance of supervisors.

Research support

- Training plan.
- Regular meetings with supervisory team.
- Active research culture.



Mode of study

- Full time.
- Part time.
- PhD by distance-learning.
- Practice-based PhD.



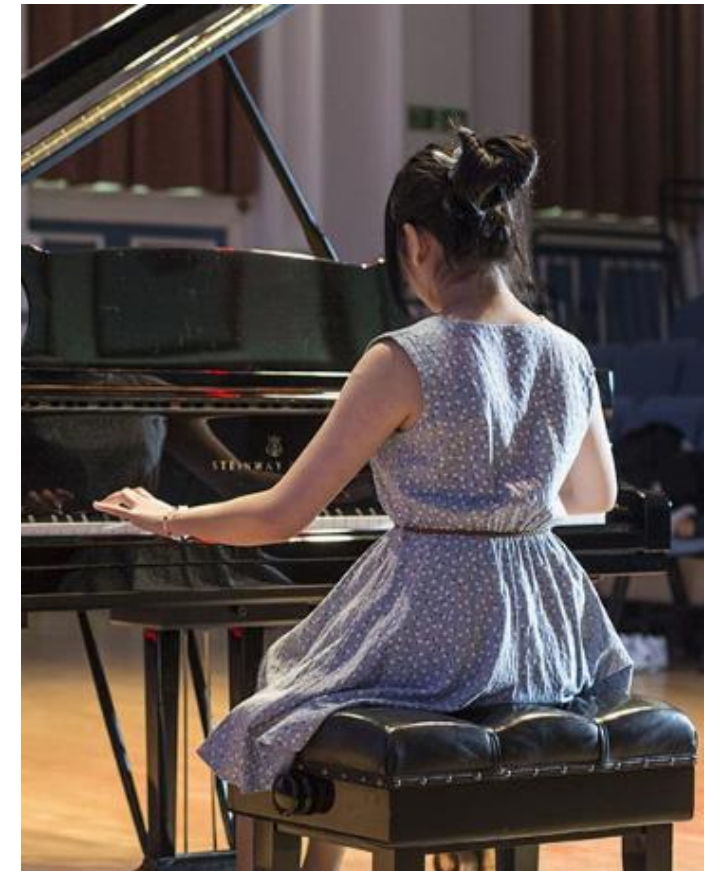
Practice-based PhD

- A project that asks a question that can only be answered through practice.
- The research will involve practical engagement manifest in an appropriate manner.
- The thesis will include a practical and a written component.



Previous practice-based PhD projects have included:

- Michele Abondano - A compositional proposal based on timbral experience.
- Ryan Kirkbride - Collaborative interfaces for ensemble live coding performance.
- Emma Gee - The death of the director? Exploring the role of the director in contemporary participative performance practice.
- Kelli Zezulka - The language of light: how theatre lighting designers use language and exercise agency in creative collaboration.



Writing a research proposal

- Characteristics of a successful research proposal.
- The different parts of the document.
- Your personal statement.



Characteristics of a successful research proposal

- Short, to the point and avoiding jargon.
- Clearly written and well presented.
- Informed by relevant research.
- Convincing of the feasibility of the project and your ability to undertake it.



Parts of the proposal

- A central research question and a series of sub-questions.
- An overview of the academic context.
- An articulation of the contribution your project is expected to make to new knowledge.
- An outline of the methods you intend to use and the reasons for selecting them.
- A timeline that demonstrates the direction/trajectory and key stages of the research.
- Information about yourself, explaining why you are interested in and well placed to conduct the research.



Personal statement

- An updated CV detailing academic and professional experience.
- A sample of practical work, if your project will be practice-based.
- Engagement with relevant professional bodies.



Scholarship applications

- All schemes are highly competitive.

Top tips

- Research the funding scheme thoroughly.
- Target your application to the scheme.
- Highlight how your proposal aligns with the scheme objectives.



“Scholarships want to support postgraduate researchers, their research and well-being and it sets any applicant in good stead if they are thoroughly familiar with what additional support is available, can reference this support in their application and even better, speculate around how such specific support, funds or schemes can support them and their research.

All such information will be accessible online and a few hours of research can pay serious dividends around how such applications are structured. It will also be clear to those assessing applications that the applicant has done their homework, a factor that will move strongly in their favour.”

Enrich your application

- Choose your referees carefully, they should know you and your work.

Look for opportunities to:

- Apply for professional or academic awards.
- Present your work at relevant events.
- Publish in academic or other fora/symposia.



"It was clear from the outset that my practice as a professional composer would go a long way to demonstrating the quality and impact of my work, and in lieu of any other qualifications, demonstrate my potential to complete a PhD.

I also realised it was important to show that my practice was research, to strengthen my research proposal to the university, and as such, choose practice examples where there was a clear research problem and research questions that I addressed through the problem-solving activity of composition.

To articulate this previous research experience, I chose examples of work such as residencies or cross-disciplinary collaborations where I had a problem to solve and where I had kept a blog or written a project progress report and evaluation that discussed what the problem and questions were, how I approached them and what outcomes were produced along with a description of impact where appropriate, all supported with links to access material online."

Preparing for your PhD at Leeds

- Do your research on the University.
- Become familiar with the research culture.
- Learn about the work of the members of staff you will approach to serve as supervisors.
- Ensure you have all the skills you will need.
- Ensure you have all the documents you need, such as academic transcripts, language qualifications and visa requirements.
- Put in place an adequate network of support.
- Check out the city.



“Think about how you will support yourself during your PhD: will you have a mentor outside of the department? A group of friends who care about you but not so much about the ins and outs of your research? It could be quite a big lifestyle change, but you can start planning for it early.

I came to the PhD from a full time job, and I gave myself a full month between my last day at work and my first day back at university. Budget now so you can afford to do a version of this too! Doing a PhD is likely to be more enjoyable if as much of the grind of daily life can be on autopilot - if you're coming out of a job it's likely your earnings will drop by doing a PhD - plan for this, work out how you can put things in place so you're as well supported as you need to be so money worries don't get in the way of your creativity.

Finally, consider where you would like to live. Doctoral study takes a long time and it is important that you feel the place suits your needs and lifestyle.”

Useful links

Search for a PhD opportunity and funding:

<https://phd.leeds.ac.uk>

Research degrees in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries:

<https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/performance-research-degrees>

Research degrees in the School of Music:

<https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/music-research-degrees>

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Graduate School:

<https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/graduate-school>

Useful links

Leeds Doctoral College:

<https://www.leeds.ac.uk/doctorscollege>

Improve your English language skills:

<https://www.leeds.ac.uk/languagecentre>

Doctoral loans:

<https://www.leeds.ac.uk/researchdegrees>



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