

# PhD application documents

- Academic transcripts \*
- Motivation letter/Statement of purpose
- Academic CV/Resume
- Research proposal
- Letters of recommendation and references
- Proof of language proficiency
- Application form
- Entry test certificates\*\*

\*May need to be officially translated

\*\*If applicable

# Academic transcripts

Your academic performance during your previous studies will have a lot of impact on your success when applying for PhD programs.

You'll be expected to submit transcripts of your Bachelor's and Master's studies, which have to show the courses you took and what grades you received during your programs.

Some PhD programs in the UK, particularly in STEM fields, may allow you apply for a PhD with only a Bachelor's degree. However, PhD programs in Arts and Humanities require a Master's degree.

If your previous studies weren't completed in the language of instruction of the PhD program you want to apply for, you may have to get your grade transcripts (and other documents) translated and stamped by a notary. For example, if you got your Bachelor's and Master's in Hungarian, but you'd like to study in Canada, you will need to get your transcripts translated into English.

## Not all degrees are created equal

Master's degrees usually hold more weight than Bachelor's degrees when it comes to applying to a PhD. So, if your Bachelor's was in an unrelated field to the PhD program you want to apply for, but your Master's is related to that PhD field, you shouldn't worry too much.

That said, make sure to check the specifics of this requirement on the program page.

# Research proposal

The majority of universities require students to submit a research proposal as a part of their PhD program application. There are some exceptions, however, like if you're applying for pre-defined research project in science, technology, engineering, mathematics or medicine. Make sure if this exception applies to your program of interest.

Your research proposal will have varying significance depending on the country you're planning on studying in. For example, your proposal holds a lot more significance in the UK than in the US.

**Remember:** You're not expected to be an expert on the topic you want to research! Your proposal only needs to outline your ideas and goals.

## To make your research proposal great...

- Define your research project clearly using an appropriate title.
- Include a statement about the research scope and significance.
  - For example, you should include: research objective, the importance and relevance of the research, why you're interested in this topic, what "gaps" in your field of study you will be covering and why the scope of research is achievable within your program duration.
- Give context on your research topic - who and what your research is linked to, and how it's related to the faculty under which you'll be studying.
- Provide examples of the methodology you'll use in your research.
- Define a strategy and a timeline for your research project.
- Include a list of references who could support your project.

### Pro tip

- Word count: 1,000 - 2,500
- 3 C's: Clear, Concise, Compelling

# CV/Resume

The aim of an academic CV for a PhD application is to showcase your potential as a researcher.

Therefore, your CV should demonstrate that you have the skills, knowledge, discipline, and passion for your desired program.

## Pro tip

- Check if your university of choice has a CV template you should follow.

Here are some things you should keep in mind when crafting your CV:

- Put your education at the top of the CV, then work and research experience.
- There are some differences between an academic CV and a standard job CV.
- You should research the standards of the country you want to study in, or even better, the CV/Resume expectations of the university you're applying for.**
  - You can usually find this out by looking through the university career services and asking them for the CV/Resume template they give to their own students.
  - Adapting your CV/Resume this way will make your application stand out from students who didn't bother researching industry/country/university standards. This type of independent and self-starter attitude is what professors and PhD mentors want to see in their candidates.

# Motivation Letter

To compose an effective motivation letter for your PhD application, it's crucial to thoroughly research the university you're interested in and the supervisors under whom you'll be studying.

## Pro tip

- Include any experiences you have related to securing research funding.

Bear in mind that faculty members and admission committees have already gone through hundreds and thousands of applications in the past, so avoid using online templates and general essay clichés if you want to make your application more unique and interesting.

Craft an interesting narrative unique to your personal academic journey and passion, but also crucially articulate why the specific university and its PhD program align with your research interests and career aspirations, and what makes you an ideal fit for them.

## Remember to adhere to general application essay best practices

- Adhere to the formatting instructions.
  - Stay within the word count and/or page limit.
  - Follow the font size and type settings.
  - Save the document in the correct file type (.pdf or .docx).
- Start off with an anecdote or an unusual statement that's relevant to the topic you're writing about.
  - Avoid opening the essay with a childhood story if it's not directly related to the topic at hand.
  - Don't use quotes, as it's hard to make them memorable.
- Proofread your essay several times.
  - You can show your essay to your teachers, family, and/or friends.
  - Try to print out your essay, as spotting grammatical mistakes is much easier on paper than on a screen.

# Additional requirements

## Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

If you're non-EU/EEA/Swiss citizen, you may be required to apply for an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate if you want to get a PhD in certain subjects in the UK.

You can check if you need to apply for this clearance on the [UK government website](#).

## Graduate Entry Tests

You may need to complete graduate entry tests to apply for a PhD in certain countries – most commonly in the US, Canada, Australia and India.

These include but are not limited to:

- Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
- Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT)
- Law School Admission Test (LSAT)
- Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)
- And various language tests.

