

# PhD Applications: What do you need?

*Applying for a PhD can seem really complicated and overwhelming. This guide gives you a sense of what you will need and where to find more guidance.*

Research



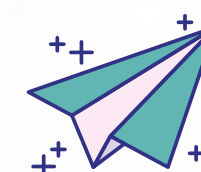
Draft Cover  
Letter/Proposal

Contact Potential  
Referees and Supervisors



Collect and Polish  
Application Materials

Apply



## Cover Letter

Cover letters are more general in comparison to a proposal, they are more varied in structure and come with many different names e.g. 'statement of purpose' or 'personal statement'. You are looking to include your academic background, how that links to your area of interest for a PhD project, why the department is a good fit for you and your interests, perhaps something more general about your interest in the university. Cover letters are more common in the US, as they often don't require a research proposal.

## Academic CV

Academic history, more information that ordinarily found on a CV about modules and grade breakdowns. Only jobs that are relevant to your project or to academia. Some coverage of your involvement in university societies, particularly anything academic oriented (e.g. sociology society or being an academic rep).

## Sample of Work

Make sure you check how long it should be. Dissertations or long coursework essays are good as they demonstrate an ability to write longer pieces of work. Choose something relevant to your project and received a good mark. Ensure you reread this work, spelling and grammar check, reference check. You can alter it further, if you think it would help.

## Funding

You may need extra cover letters and referees to apply for funding. Make sure you know the requirements and deadlines for all funding available. Check the deadline for internal funding, as this may differ from their application deadline. Some forms of funding are linked with universities so you will be automatically considered, others will have to be applied to separately. Take a look at LSE Careers list of funding types and bodies [here](#):  
Funded projects come up throughout the year, where the project and funding have already been decided. These can be found on sites such as [findaphd.com](#).

## Research Proposal

Proposals vary in length but generally cover the following:

- Research question (what you are looking to find out).
- Relevant literature (what research/knowledge is there in this field, where the gap is that you will address)
- Methodology (how you are going to address this and find the answers to your research question).
- Whether you have done previous research or work in the area - more generally how your interest in this area has come about.
- Some proposals will want you to mention who you are interested in supervising you or why you think the department is a good fit for you.

## Referees

Choose referees who know you well, this might be your academic mentor or it might not. If you have been to multiple institutions, try to get a referee from each institution. If you have just started your masters, this may seem daunting. Letting your academic mentor know of your plans might help in getting a reference, otherwise using two references from your undergraduate degree is acceptable. Offer them work samples and a rough draft of your proposal/cover letter to support their writing. Ensure that you leave them sufficient time to write a reference and let them know the deadline.

## Useful links:

[Find a PhD](#)