

PhD in Economics

Structure of the PhD Programme

In the first year of the Programme students are required to take Advanced Research Methods in Economics and strongly recommended to take Advanced Research Training in Microeconomics, Advanced Research Training in Macroeconomics and Advanced Research Training in Econometrics. Depending on their needs doctoral researchers could substitute one course (other than Advanced Research Methods in Economics) with another from the Department's suite of [MSc Programmes \(/schools/business/departments/economics/courses/postgraduate-programmes.aspx\)](#).

Students are required to achieve a high standard in the examinations held at the end of the first semester in order to proceed to the research phase of their PhD.

[Economics PhD details \(/postgraduate/courses/research/econ/economics.aspx\)](#)



By the end of the second semester first year PhD students will have completed, as part of the course in Advanced Research Methods, a 10,000 word research proposal that they will present at a PhD workshop. This research proposal forms the basis for supervised research over the remaining two years of the Programme and ultimately, the production of the 80,000 word PhD thesis. Full time students must finish all substantive research within three years and submit their thesis within four years (the end of the 'writing up' year).

[View Doctoral Researcher profiles \(/schools/business/research/doctoral-research/phd-profiles/index.aspx\)](#) for the Department of Economics, as well as other departments within the Business School.

Supervision

[Open all sections](#)

As a research student your key relationship will be with your supervisors. You will be allocated a main supervisor, a second supervisor and a mentor who can give you independent advice on a range of matters. You will meet with your supervisors regularly to discuss your PhD. Your supervisory team will provide timely oral and written feedback on your research. As a PhD student you can expect to meet with your supervisors at least once every four weeks and to meet your mentor whenever required.

How to apply

You are encouraged to apply online. You will be required to supply a covering letter, your academic transcript, evidence of English Language ability (if applicable), two academic references and a short research proposal 3 to 4 pages in length. The objective of the research proposal is to ensure that suitable PhD supervisors are available to supervise you in your chosen field and also to assist the selection committee in identifying candidates who are already able to structure a Programme of research and who can demonstrate an awareness of the key research papers. The PhD proposal should be your own work and is subject to checking.

The decision process can take up to four weeks if, for example, your PhD applications is thought to be promising but a particular supervisor is for whatever reason unable to accept you as a student and an alternative has to be found. In such instances the Department will write to you and explain the delay.

It is now the policy of the Department to interview all candidates before making them an offer of a place on the PhD Programme. In most cases this will take the form of a telephone interview or an email exchange intended to clarify aspects of the student's application or explore further the student's research interests and discuss sources of funding. The Department wishes to make sure that Birmingham is the appropriate choice for any students to whom it makes an offer.

The Department accepts PhD applications throughout the year. However, students who apply later than the middle of August may find that there is insufficient time for the Department to evaluate the application and, if we make an offer, for the student to complete all the necessary formalities (particularly if the student is from outside the EU). Late applicants are likely to be offered admission to the PhD Programme in the following year. Note that students must commence the PhD Programme at the beginning of the first semester i.e. at the end of September. PhD students are not permitted to start their studies at any other time of the year.

General

PhD students are expected to participate to the fullest possible extent in the life of the Department. This means taking part in the Department's regular internal and external seminars, as well as miscellaneous events organised by the various research groups. All students are required to attend the weekly PhD workshop. Once a year students are required to present their work to the PhD workshop and can expect to receive lively feedback from members of staff not directly involved in the student's supervision.

PhD students are expected to stay informed about the activities of professional bodies and societies. As a PhD student you should be prepared to take advantage of relevant workshops and conferences in other Universities since these provide an excellent opportunity to network and meet leading international researchers. Generous funding is available to all PhD students to promote participation in external activities.

If appropriate for their research PhD students have the opportunity to spend part of their studies in top Chinese and Korean University as part of a formal exchange agreement, as well as to participate with the Universitas 21 network of research led universities, of which Birmingham is a member.

Entry requirements

Admission to the PhD Programme requires an MSc degree in Economics, or some closely related discipline e.g. Finance, from a respected academic institution and with an average mark of at least 65 percent. In some instances the Department will make its offer of admission to the PhD Programme conditional on an applicant's exam results. This 'conditional' offer is subsequently converted into an 'unconditional' offer as soon as the terms of the offer have been met.

Fees and Scholarships

Fees

PhD students in Economics pay standard fees over the course of the 3 year Programme.

Scholarships

It is likely that the Department will have at least two fully funded ESRC scholarships. These offer the payment of fees and generous maintenance grants of circa £16,500 per annum. These are available to students from both inside and outside the EU. There are moreover no restrictions on the area of research. There are however strict deadlines regarding the application process. Applications must be received by 9 December 2013. Competition for these scholarships is intense and those hoping to obtain one of these awards will need to have an outstanding academic transcript.

At the time of writing it also appears likely that the Department will be in a position to offer a number of PhD scholarships tied to research in a particular area. These also offer the payment of fees and generous maintenance grants of circa £16,500 per annum. When these have been finalised they will be posted on the website (please keep checking – we anticipate that further information will be available by the middle of November).

The Business School also offers a number of student bursaries offering the payment of fees but without maintenance. The precise deadline for applications is yet to be announced but is likely to be in March (please keep checking the website).

You must explicitly state that you wish to be considered for scholarships otherwise we will assume that you have private means of support. The Department will automatically shortlist candidates on the basis of academic merit and submit these applications to a panel for further evaluation. We will inform you if you have been successful (no further action is required on your part). If in the meantime you decide to take up the offer of another institution it is important that you inform the Department at the earliest possible opportunity, otherwise you risk depriving another student of financial support.

Finally, the University of Birmingham itself also offers a number of scholarships to PhD students through the Graduate School. Competition for these scholarships is similarly intense. To obtain further information on these scholarships applicants should visit the Graduate School website.

Teaching opportunities

The Department relies heavily on its PhD students to serve as class teachers. PhD students are permitted to teach undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses up to an average of 6 hours per week. A student teaching up to the permitted maximum can expect to defray a considerable proportion of their annual fees. PhD students are however not normally permitted to teach in the first year of the PhD Programme. Furthermore class teachers are required to undergo training and are screened for suitability as class teachers. Although the majority of PhD students serve as class teachers the availability of teaching cannot therefore be guaranteed. For this reason applicants to the PhD Programmes must not rely on class teaching in order to cover their fees or maintenance.

Visiting students

Apart from admitting its own PhD students the Department occasionally accepts visits from PhD students enrolled at other Universities. Applications which are not targeted to specific members of staff and which are not supported by existing links between members of staff between Birmingham and the host institution are however unlikely to succeed. Applications for visitor status should send a detailed research proposal to the Director of the PhD Programme. Visitors are liable to pay a bench fee whose value is linked to the duration of the visit. .

Frequently asked questions

Does the Department offer part time PhDs or part time external PhDs?

Because of the existence of the taught component the first year of the PhD Programme is open only to full time students. It may however be possible to transfer to part time status for the second and third year of the PhD Programme. There are now strict requirements about part time external PhD students. Please contact the Director of the PhD Programme for details.

How should I structure my research proposal?

The research proposal should extend to no more than 3 or 4 pages. It should pinpoint a number of closely related research questions, identify the relevant literature and provide an explanation of the manner in which the research will contribute to the stock of knowledge (a fundamental requirement for a PhD). The research proposal should further explain what techniques and / or data you anticipate using and also provide a plan for completion within three years. The PhD proposal should be your own work and is subject to checking. It might be helpful to explain in a covering letter precisely why you feel that Birmingham is a suitable place for your proposed PhD e.g. you wish to study under the supervision of a particular member of staff.

Can I change my research or am I tied to studying what I said I would in my PhD research proposal?

Unless your source of funding specifically binds you it is possible to change your research topic at up to the end of the first semester subject to approval and being able to find suitable supervisors.

Can I defer admission?

Once you have been accepted onto the PhD Programme it is normally possible to defer admission to the next academic session. This is subject to the approval of both the Director of the PhD Programme and the two supervisors. .