



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



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# HOW TO APPLY

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# RESEARCH PROGRAMMES



# THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The majority of formal applications for PhDs are made directly to us through our Postgraduate application system, using Course finder. You will also be able to apply to advertised PhDs via the links in the listed projects. Follow our step-by-step guide to help you in your preparation.

There are, generally, two routes to a Birmingham research degree:

**1** You can apply to an 'advertised PhD', which means it is part of an established research project and is usually funded by the University or other funding body.

**2** Apply to any of our PhD programmes and propose your own research that is 'self-funded' (by you, a sponsor, or other sources not explicitly attached to the PhD on application). Usually you submit a research proposal and identify your proposed supervisor.

Our PhD programmes often allow for you to begin throughout the academic year, especially when proposing your own research. However, many advertised PhDs and funding bodies have early deadlines, so we would advise you apply early to allow time to explore your funding options and apply for any opportunities.



## Application deadlines

UK/EU non-visa applicants can apply up to 10 September 2020 to programmes starting in September 2020.

## International students

If you require a visa to study in the United Kingdom, you will need to apply by 1 July 2020 to begin your research in September 2020. If you apply after 1 July, your start date will need to be after September 2020.

## YOUR DOCUMENTS



All documents must be in English or have a certified translation. If you provide documents by uploading them into the online postgraduate application system (found through Course finder) and are made an offer, you will be required to send certified copies or original documents as a condition of the offer.

For full guidance on the application process and document submission, please visit: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgapply](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgapply)

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS



You will need to demonstrate a certain level of English language. If your undergraduate degree was taught in an English speaking country, you may already meet our requirements. Otherwise we accept English tests such as IELTS, TOEFL or PTE. Certificates should be no more than two years old at the time of admission.

View specific programme requirements on the course finder page, or visit your country page to find out more on English Language requirements: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/country](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/country)

## YOUR REFERENCES

Whether your reference is academic (eg personal tutors, dissertation supervisors) or from your employer, please make sure it is on headed paper with the organisation's logo and address. References can also be submitted directly via the portal if your referee follows the link that is sent to their institution's email address. The reference should include the date, your details and the details of the referee with a summary of how they know you and confirm your suitability for studying on the course you have applied for. It should be signed by the referee with their official contact details.

If you are unsure about your referees' suitability, submit them in your application and we will contact you if we need more information.

**Tip:** If your referee is appropriate for a job application, then they can be used as your second reference for your postgraduate application.



# APPLYING FOR A RESEARCH PROGRAMME

At Birmingham, there are generally two routes to a research degree. Follow the application steps on this page, or next, depending on your preferred route.



## APPLYING FOR AN 'ADVERTISED PHD'

**1** Find and identify your project via our advertised PhDs database [www.birmingham.ac.uk/findaphd](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/findaphd)



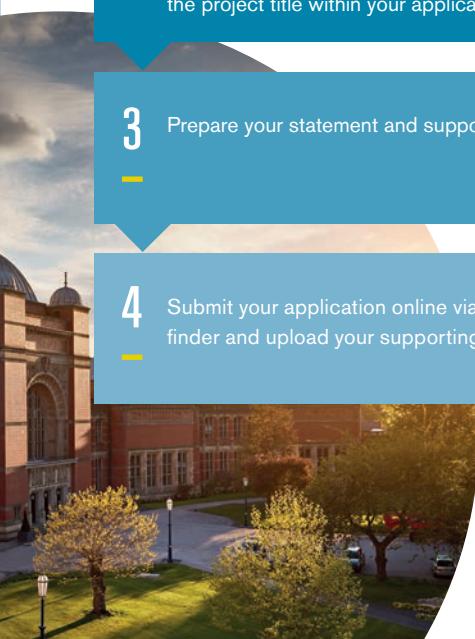
Find your course online:  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/  
pgcourses](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgcourses)

Search our advertised PhDs:  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/  
findaphd](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/findaphd)

**2** Apply via Course finder to the relevant PhD subject area. You may be applying to the specific project or be asked to apply to a larger subject area and identify the project title within your application.

**3** Prepare your statement and supporting documents.

**4** Submit your application online via Course finder and upload your supporting documents.



## APPLY TO PROPOSE YOUR OWN RESEARCH

**1** Choose which research degree (PhD, MA/MSc by Research or MRes) and consider the research area and themes.

**2** Begin your supervisor search ([www.birmingham.ac.uk/findasupervisor](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/findasupervisor)).

**3** Consult with a potential supervisor or department and discuss your proposal with them

**4** Explore your funding options:  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgfunding](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgfunding)

**5** Write your research proposal using our online advice ([www.birmingham.ac.uk/proposalwriting](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/proposalwriting)).

**6** Submit your application via Course finder and upload your supporting documents, including your research proposal and potential supervisor name(s).



Search for a potential supervisor:  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/findasupervisor](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/findasupervisor)



# WRITING YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL

It is a key part of your application, on which potential supervisors will decide if your research is something they can support. Your research should demonstrate the key concepts of originality and impact.

We've provided help and advice for each of the steps of writing your proposal here: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/proposalwriting](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/proposalwriting)

## WHAT SHOULD YOU INCLUDE?



- ✓ Research topic
- ✓ Review of the literature
- ✓ Research objectives
- ✓ Research strategy
- ✓ Anticipated results
- ✓ Schedule and budget
- ✓ References and bibliography

## WHAT DOES EACH TERM MEAN?

Below is an explanation of the document types we refer to during the application process.

- **Certified** – having your original documents copied and then officially recognised with an official institution's stamp or watermark so you do not need to send off the original.
- **Verified** – checked by the University or our representatives that the document is official and genuine. If an electronic copy is sent to us directly from the awarding institution, we class this as verified.
- **Transcript** – usually an additional document which comes with your certificate, detailing your grades achieved per module of your degree programme(s) and the overall grade.

### Who can certify your documents?

- **Notary** – A notary is usually a lawyer (though not necessarily so in the United States) or person with legal training who is licensed by the government to perform acts in legal affairs, in particular witnessing signatures on documents.
- **The British Council** – has offices all over the world.
- **University of Birmingham Overseas Representative** – We have overseas representatives listed on your country webpage. They can offer advice and certify your documents as well as verifying your documents on site rather than sending to the UK.



### Essential information

Before you apply, please visit our website to view essential information for all applicants: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/applicantinformation](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/applicantinformation)

If the University makes you an offer, and you decide to accept it, a contract will be formed between you and the University. The website includes important terms, conditions and requirements that will apply to that contract, and on which the University will rely in its future relationship with you. It is essential that you read them carefully.

Information set out in this guide and on the University website is accurate at the date of publication (November 2019).

# CHECK OUR ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

To gain a place at Birmingham, you will need to meet the specific entry requirements for your chosen course.

Our research programmes usually require a **good Honours degree (normally a 2:1 or above)**, or an equivalent qualification if you were educated outside the UK and usually a good Masters-level degree.

Specific entry requirements for individual courses can be found on each course page: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgcourses](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgcourses)

## PROOF OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY DOCUMENTS



Make sure that your test results are no more than two years old from the start date of your course at the University of Birmingham.

You can scan and upload a copy of your results to the Postgraduate application portal.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO APPLY



Academic certificate and transcript(s)



Personal statement



Proof of English language proficiency



Two references



Research proposal, if you are proposing your own research

# WHAT NEXT?

Once you submit your application through our application system, you will be able to track its progress at every stage of the process, update your personal information, view decisions and accept any offers you may receive.



1

When we receive your application, it is marked as 'pending' on your portal, and is held by the central Admissions team to assess the documents you have submitted.

2

Once the required documents have been received and your application has been checked, it is referred to the relevant school or department for assessment. Staff will consider your application and make a decision, and will instruct the Admissions team.

3

The decision will be received and processed by the Admissions team, who will identify any further requirements and conditions if an offer is to be made. Once a decision is made, our Admissions Office will notify you.

4

The decision will be one of the below:

- A conditional offer – the offer of a place is subject to you meeting the conditions stated in your offer letter;
- An unconditional offer – you have met all the conditions required for entry;
- We are unable to offer you a place

If made an offer, you will be required to accept by a deadline, stated in your offer letter.

Further information on the application process, next steps and how to use the application portal can be found on our website: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgapply](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/pgapply)