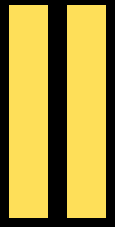




democratising access to higher education

Applying for PhDs in the Asia-Pacific  
Sunday, 16 October 2022



# Outline

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# Project EduAccess

Access to higher education is a privilege most people from marginalised communities are systematically denied through cost, information and dispositional barriers.

**Project EduAccess** is a modest attempt to improve inclusivity in HEIs by removing these barriers for marginalized communities in South Asia.

We hope to achieve this by providing expert mentorship, support and guidance to learners in South Asia.

# Meet your panelists



Param Pandya

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Ph.D. (Corporate Governance)  
National University of Singapore.



Yamini Kannappan

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Ph.D. Extractive  
Metallurgy  
WASM, Curtin University.



SR Bhat

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Ph.D. Law  
UNSW Sydney.



# Nomenclature

- A degree in research is called a 'higher degree by research' (HDR) and includes
  - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD),
  - Joint PhD, and
  - Master's by research/Master of Philosophy (MPhil).



# Preparing for a PhD – Building your Profile

- A doctoral degree requires you to undertake rigorous, independent research in your field of study. Therefore, you should be able to show that you have good research skills. Good academic grades sometimes matter when it comes to a PhD programme. However, what will give you an edge over other applicants is your ability to undertake quality research.
- You can build your profile for a PhD by:
  - Pursuing research assistantships with professors in your field of study
  - Pursuing research internships/ projects at various organisations
  - Publishing articles/ blogs
  - Pursuing a research degree
  - Writing original dissertations in your undergraduate/Master's degrees
  - Having work experience in your relevant field of study
  - Applying for teaching/ tutoring roles



# Application checklist

## Step 1: Determine Your Eligibility

The most important criteria to assess your eligibility to pursue HDR study is your previous research experience.

- You need to have undertaken a significant research project or thesis in your previous university-level studies.
- This could be the equivalent of:
  - an Australian (or equivalent) honours degree
  - a master's by research degree
  - a master's by coursework with a thesis component (dissertation)

## Step 2: Find a Supervisor and Prepare Your Research Description

Finding a supervisor with compatible research interests and working styles is critical to your success as a Higher Degree Research candidate. Most Faculties/Schools require applicants to contact potential supervisors.



# .....continued

## Step 3: Expression of interest

Before you make a formal application, you may be asked submit an EOI providing information about your academic, professional or other qualifications.

## Step 3: Prepare Your Supporting Documentation

Research proposal , Academic transcripts (including grading systems for each degree and institution), Resume/Curriculum Vitae, provide evidence of your English ability, two reference letters

## Step 4: English Translations of Documents

## Step 5: Meet the English Language Requirements

## Step 6: Submit an Application



# Approaching a Supervisor

- For most PhD programmes, you are expected to first reach out to a potential supervisor you think can best guide you and run your research ideas past them, though it differs each department and university-wise.
- However, approaching a supervisor is very University specific and you must check with alumni/current students before doing so.
- This process of approaching potential supervisors can be daunting! It involves cold-emailing several professors and hoping for a reply!
- You are likely to hear from a potential supervisor if your first email to them includes:
  - Explain your research topic in two lines and then demonstrate how it aligns with the area of work of the supervisor or why you are interested to work with them
  - Your academic CV (containing a profile of all your research experience)
  - Ask for feedback on your proposal.



# Research Proposal

- A research proposal is a central part of any PhD application.
- It is a statement that presents the research idea or question you wish to explore through your PhD thesis.
- Research proposals are usually assessed on their quality, originality and coherence. They are significant because they not only give reviewers a clear sense of how prepared you are for doctoral research, but also allow them to assess whether the university/department can support you adequately.
- Since the process of drafting research proposals involves careful reflection on your intended research (including approach, methodology, and feasibility), it will help you clarify your idea and make conducting your research easier when you start your PhD.

# Topics to Cover in a Research Proposal

1

Title + Introduction

2

Literature Review

3

Statement of Problem +  
Research Questions

4

Methodology

5

Significance

6

Timeline

7

Field Plan

8

Ethical Concerns

9

Tentative  
Bibliography /  
References



# Statement of Purpose

- Most crucial document in the whole application - Takes over 3-4 months to come up with a succinct and lucid statement.
- It is always helpful to have your letter proof-read by people you trust.
- You can even ask your potential supervisors to read your SoP (*conflict of interest*)
- It is best to stay within the prescribed word limit
- List the names of the faculty with whom you want to work with, and how their work aligns with yours
- Few things to ponder about while writing your SoP
  - Why you are the best person to pursue this project? And so what?
  - What you have done so far, why you want to do this, and what you want to do after this.



# Timeline of a Doctoral Degree

- A doctoral degree in any discipline takes a minimum of 3 years (full time)
- Certain universities requires studying some courses during your first year of Ph.D. However, there are no course requirements to be completed for Australian universities (except for methods and ethics).
- TA-ing for undergraduate /graduate courses is not mandatory but encouraged.
- Confirmation at the end of year one.
- Look for the requirements you need to meet while pursuing your degree, or the expected goals each department sets for the year.
- Look at Job Placements of international alumni students.



# Finances

- Most of the universities have a non refundable application fee.
- Expenditure while applying- IELTS, TOEFL, Application Fee, Score sending fees, Visa etc.
- Financial support from the University - depends but usually 4 years
- What else can they pay you: Relocation Cost, Travel Expenses, Health Insurance, Summer Funding, Conference expenses, Technology Funds? (Varies with each university)
- Look at university fellowships you can apply for while pursuing your PhD



# Application Timeline

Varies with each university and country. Australia offers three intake seasons in a year

1. March Release
  - a. Applications close in last week of January
  - b. Offers roll out in March
  - c. Course begins in September (T3)
  
2. June Release
  - a. Applications close in first week of May
  - b. Offers roll out in June
  - c. Course begins in February (T1)
  
3. November Release
  - a. Applications close in first week of October
  - b. Offers roll out in November
  - c. Course begins in June (T2)



# Funding

- Australia has one of the largest and generous research scholarships schemes in the world.
- Most universities have
  - Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship
    - Funded by the Australian government
    - Provides a tuition fee offset, Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC), visa cost, travel reimbursement and a stipend for international students.
  - University Postgraduate International Awards
    - Funded by universities
    - provide a tuition fee offset, Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC), Travel reimbursement and a stipend for international students.
  - University Postgraduate Awards
    - Tuition Fees by universities
    - Stipend funded by the Faculty, School or Supervisor





# Application and Selection Criteria

The application cycle is open thrice a year (T1 intake, T2 intake, T3 intake)

To be considered for a scholarship, you must:

- a. complete your application for admission in postgraduate research to the relevant faculty, and select the checkbox to be considered for research scholarships
- b. ensure your application includes all relevant supporting documents, referring to the RTP/UPA applicant information pack and research experience guide and evidence template (see related documents below).

The successful applicant will be awarded the Scholarship on the basis of:

- a. academic merit,
- b. research experience,
- c. availability of a high quality research environment and resources to support the candidature, and
- d. availability of high quality supervisory arrangements to support the candidature



# General Tips

- Before you start drafting your research proposal, research various universities carefully to confirm that they have Ph.D. programmes and supervisors that align with your research interests.
- Make sure you address why your research question is worth pursuing. Don't just assume that a potential supervisor or admissions committee will agree with you that it is worth pursuing.
- Remember that it is more impressive to meaningfully explore a narrower research question than to superficially explore multiple research questions or a broad research question.
- Adopt a clear and easy-to-read structure, with appropriate headings. Ensure that your proposal is clear, concise and coherent.
- Refine and edit your proposal a number of times before it is submitted. Ensure that your research proposal has been proofread by someone familiar with your field of study (to confirm that it conforms to academic standards). Run a grammar and spell check before submitting your proposal!
- Check each university's website for guidance on points to cover in your proposal, word/ character limits, formatting and citations, submission guidelines, deadlines, and additional documents or evidence.



# Ph.D. Life!!!

- Not a sprint but a marathon - Patience, Perseverance and Discipline is key
- Path to success is often lonely - same with Ph.D
- Research Proposal is just the first step, be open-minded and adapt to changes
- Mental and Physical health are very important - take breaks to take care of yourself; Do not feel guilty about taking time for yourself.
- Make optimum use of the research environment and resources at hand



# Ph.D. Life!!!

- Keep short term goals - for instance, the qualifying exams and remember to celebrate them when accomplished
- One may continue to engage in some other activity/ hobbies along with the Ph.D
- No pains, no gains - Ph.D. is rewarding (just that intellectual stimulation comes at a cost)
- Focus on the experience - the destined end is not going away!!



# Stay Connected

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Other ways to get in touch

