

## What Is A PhD For?

A PhD is an apprenticeship (*pemagangan*) for a scientist. After PhD training a scientist will be able to undertake research independently, in the same way that qualified electricians can complete the wiring for buildings or qualified engineers can design safe bridges on their own.

To complete a PhD, a student should develop a deep knowledge of past and current knowledge in their topic area, be able to identify new scientific questions that will advance understanding in their field, be able to carry out research techniques themselves and in collaboration with others, and be able to objectively interpret and explain how their results advance understanding in their field.

Often the skills developed during a PhD are summarised by saying that a PhD qualified researcher can undertake “publishable research” (*Indonesian?*).

## Tips For Approaching A PhD Supervisor

### The role of a PhD supervisor

To gain knowledge of the topic, ways of thinking, technical expertise, and presentation skills, a PhD student needs a mentor and guide (*Indonesian?*). A PhD supervisor discusses and gives feedback, organises the working environment, and associates their name with the work of the student. For this reason, a successful supervisor should have:

- Expertise in the field of research
- Shared interests to work on a research question with the student
- Suitable research facilities and resources to host the student
- Time and enthusiasm to regularly discuss with and mentor the student

### Identifying a supervisor

A PhD supervisor must be a faculty member at a university. All academic staff at universities should have personal web pages describing their research interests; thus finding potential supervisors requires browsing or searching the websites of possible host universities.

One way to validate the expertise of a potential supervisor is to look at their past publications. However, supervisors with large research groups and long publication lists may have many resources but less time for personal interactions with each of their students.

It may be necessary to contact a number of potential supervisors. However, only discuss with one or at most two possible supervisors at a university at any one time. Always make unique personal approaches. Never send multiple generic emails. If you get a negative response then ask if the contact can suggest a different person at the same or another university.

### Creating the right impression

When first contacting a potential supervisor, it is necessary to:

1. Explain what you want and the funding you have available
2. Outline your research interests and long-term goals
3. Provide a concise description of yourself

Normally you will first make contact with potential supervisors by email. In this email you should:

1. **Introduce Yourself: Who you are and what you want**

- Give your name, academic qualifications, and current role using 1-2 sentences.
- State clearly that you are looking for a PhD supervisor using 1 sentence.
- Briefly explain your available funding including the official source, amount and duration of funding, and what the funding covers (stipend, tuition fees, materials/travel costs) using 2 sentences.

2. **Explain your research interests and goals: Why the supervisor should be interested**

A PhD student and supervisor will be working together for 4 years so it is very important that both the student and supervisor are interested in the research question.

Take 3-5 sentences to explain your personal research interests, the reasons for your motivation, and your long-term career goals. This is your initial pitch so be clear and concise.

- Your interests should overlap with the broad interests of the potential PhD supervisor as outlined on their personal web page and/or publications.
- It is important to be clear and explicit about your own interests. This demonstrates that you are focused and motivated.
- Avoid being too narrow when stating your interests. Describe the general area, but do not propose an exact research question. If you are too prescriptive then the potential supervisor may not be interested in the question.

3. **Formal CV: A concise description of yourself**

Attach your academic CV to the email as a PDF or Word document.

An academic CV typically has the following sections:

- a. Personal details. Give name (underline surname), nationality, date of birth, postal and email address. You can include a photo in top right if desired but this is not necessary.
- b. University academic qualifications. Give the official name of each degree/diploma, awarding university, and start and end month/year of study for each.
- c. Employment history. Give title of each post with start and end month/year.
- d. Research experience. Give title of project, start and end month/year, supervisor name and funding if appropriate. Include a 1 sentence description of the techniques you learned or used in the project.
- e. Publications, conference posters/presentations and awards. Give title and full author list (underline your name), along with the journal citation or conference details. Give journal impact factor if indexed, or state if the poster/presentation won a prize. List any academic prizes awarded.
- f. Two academic referees that can be contacted. Give name, title of referee, their academic role, and their email address.

Your CV should not normally be longer than 2 pages.