1. What are the different ways to finance a PhD?

* Scholarships, grants, university scholarships, teaching assistantships
* If you are BIPOC you might be eligible for a diversity supplement from the NIH.
* National grants, advertised PhD positions, research assistants, fellowships, can be combined.
* Look for programs that offer stipends appropriate for cost of living for the area.
* Look for programs with T32 training grants to help fund students.

1. Umbrella or focused program. Does it matter?

* Depends on what stage of your research you’re at. If you’re just starting, umbrella programs offer greater flexibility.
* Whatever gives you the most choices for interesting labs
* Depends if you want to work in an interdisciplinary group or specialised.

1. I am overwhelmed by how many programs there are how do I choose?

* Always choose a program for the advisor – Relationship with your advisor can make or break grad school.
* Funding – it might seem weird but it’s necessary
* Average time to graduation
* Prioritise who you’d like to work with, where you’d like to live and the financial support you’d receive.
* Supervisor. A bad supervisor will ruin your life as mine did (currently) is doing.
* Mentor match is the most critical thing. Location is temporary. Mentors are for life.
* Prioritize who you’d like to work with, where you’d like to live and the financial support you’d like to receive.
* Pick a program in a location you’d actually want to live.
* Location, program, your interests, university profile, expertise, tuition.
* Research in the department, job placements, testimonials of PhDs
* I didn’t apply unless there were at least 3 profs I was especially interested in. Have backups.
* Don’t go to grad school unless you already know you want to.

1. How do I assess programs? What questions should I really be asking?

* Ask current Grad Students if they are happy.
* Availability of professional development and career exploration opportunities
* What is the mentoring style like?
* Ask about work-life balance. What do they do and what would the expectations be of you?
* Always talk to current students – note tone and comfort.
* Ask current students what they do for fun. About work-life balance.
* How did the university/department handle covid? Did students feel safe coming back?
* Publishing with profs, outcome of PhDs, mentoring & training, opportunities for PhDs.
* Definitely ask how programs ensure their students stand out in the job market.

1. How can I bring up a conversation about disability support with potential PIs without it coming across as special treatment or lowered expectations of work quality?

* First realise that you are not asking for special treatment. If a PI thinks that they are not a good fit. Accommodations will allow you to improve your quality of work not lower it!
* The best way to gauge how this will go is to try and talk to the PIs students first! Ask how supportive the PI is in general. Then mention disability and see what the response is.
* If your PI is worried about funding ask if you can do some TAing in later years.
* I wish I had framed it like this – my disability impacts me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and in order to accomplish my responsibilities. I need xyz accommodations to support my success. Can you offer that?
* Ask does the university have an accommodations office for graduate students needs?

1. Can I change discipline for my PhD?

* Absolutely – I would encourage to explore. PhD in something you love.
* Yes, if you have a good understanding of the discipline you want to move into.

1. Should you do a masters or go straight to PhD?

* Your end goals, where you think you want to be should drive this decision.
* Confidence level, supervisor assessment, previous research experience.
* Masters is to make sure you like research first. Test the waters, PhD – long commitment
* I went straight to PhD because it would save me time and money.
* In some countries masters is compulsory
* All depends on how much research experience you have and how you can show it.
* Depends on your end goal and your field. My PhD program gets a masters on the way
* Depending on existing experience. MS can build skills, but they aren’t always needed
* Depends on the field and what your dream job requires
* No clue that was even an option until recently – its not common it every field
* Depends on UG grade – masters prepare and increase chance for PhD and better decision of res field.
* Funding intrinsic excitement. Can do PhD -> Ms. But some advisors only consider PhD application with a MSc
* If you need more research/training. If the PhD program requires an MA
* If you want to do a masters go for it
* I started a masters and upgraded to a PhD – it’s a possibility in some disciplines/countries.
* I had enough research experience as an undergrad, so I went straight to PhD
* If you have good research experience you can skip
* Independence, self-discipline, critical thinking skills for PhD – can be good for a PhD
* Lack of funding lead me to skipping the Masters
* At my uni – masters are self-financed & expensive. PhD is funded.
* Masters can tide you over and learn skills until you secure funding for PhD
* Masters is the best way to see overview of research field before digging deep.
* For it masters was to see if I really wanted to go into that area of research
* Can depend on the opportunities at the time
* Some PIs only consider applications with a masters – they’ll reject you with no other considerations
* Depends on type of job you want after the degrees
* IF you cannot commit to a 5-6 ye period of intense studying and lab then do masters
* I thought I was going straight to PhD but issues in my lab had me ‘master out’ and change discipline
* Masters was not offered for my major, so I went for the PhD
* I think this would be field dependent – many doctoral programs offer a masters within their program.
* MS- dependent on job interests – PhD after MS thesis
* Taking to my undergrad professors helped me decide
* Depends on the program – I was able to go straight into a PhD without a masters
* My program required a masters for considerations

1. Can you reapply to a lab you’ve already interviewed & been rejected from?

Yes – 118

No – 31

1. How can you start assessing your own research ideas?

* Is it feasible? Is it applicable in my field? Am I excited about it? Does it serve my community?
* Read, talk to formal/informal mentors, attend webinars & conferences of general interest
* Write everything in a journal. Share with a senior mentor you trust
* Evaluate feasibility (given resources and time) with novelty in context of existing lit
* Conduct a lit review and see what’s hot and happening surrounding your topic
* Yes, as long as they fit within the scope of the general research topic of the lab
* Read the conclusion section of per-reviewed papers on topics you’re interested in research
* Write down what you are interested in and look up the literature (e.g.) on google scholar
* Solemn thinking via seclusion
* Sharing them with others in your field (e.g.) conferences
* Try to design your experiments and check if its plausible and check other papers in similar areas
* Reading topics to find ones that interest you is a good start and ruling out those that don’t.
* Discussing them with others. Especially those you would want to collab with.
* Talk to mentor at your undergrad, read papers on google scholar, start a lit review
* Read, read, and keep reading. Work with your data and some day you’ll have some new idea.

1. Who should you ask to review your personal statement?

* Literally everyone and anyone
* Close friends’ colleague & someone outside your field for an unbiased opinion.
* Professor or undergrad advisor, maybe career centre at your school.
* I asked my peers, my parents, current PI, Parents really helped with general clarity
* Get a diverse group to review your statement
* Guide or mentor
* Your mentors, letters of reference writers, a writing centre on campus if available.
* People who have been accepted to grad programs before.
* Friends/family and one colleague in grad school/field
* Everyone you trust then 5 more. Including at least 1 person you’re afraid to ask feedback from.
* Mentors
* Someone who can give you feedback and has an idea of how the process works
* Everyone, friends & family first, followed by different professors and finally with my mentor.
* Grad assistants or faculty mentors
* Postdocs and grad students if you work in a lab currently
* Close friends and professors
* Students, post docs, professors from any lab
* Previous supervisor if they have time. Also, anyone who can do a grammar check
* Grad students, professors (if they are available), friends who are good at proofreading
* Fellow students, mentors – anyone who has time and is willing to help
* School writing lab
* Research mentor, peer, someone outside of science to check for readability
* Someone who successfully got into grad school, a friend who is an academic if you have one
* Recent graduates – they have a good sense of what people are looking for right now.

1. Do you need publications to apply for a PhD?

(Instagram)

Yes – 50

No – 321

(Twitter-79 people)

Yes – 11.4%

No – 88.6%

1. Fields/disciplines needing publications for a PhD?

* Economics/Social sciences
* Nursing
* Certain countries/universities
* Political sciences
* Clinical psychology

1. How can I find a mentor?

* Knock on doors and chat with people. Mentorship is an advisor you trust
* Seek out those with similar interests in research
* Student groups, uni careers centre
* Through peers
* Ask other grad students, interview possible mentors find people working in desired field.
* Ask current prof for suggestions/look at department website
* Ask someone who understands you at a human level
* Ask someone you meet that you have good chemistry with
* Email those who share your research interests
* Ask people you trust and look up to.