



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

## Your Guide to Further Study

Embarking on further study is a bold step toward deepening your expertise, advancing your career, or pivoting into a new field. This concise guide offers clear, actionable advice on choosing the right program, navigating applications, securing funding, and balancing academic and personal life.

Whether you're considering a diploma, master's, or PhD, this guide equips you with the tools and insights to make informed decisions, support your application process and thrive in your next academic chapter.

If short free online upskilling courses are of interest to you, [explore our 'Build Your Skills' page](#).

### Choosing Your Next Adventure: Is Further Study For You?

Whilst further study brings a lot of benefits, it is important to think about your motivation, and to decide if you are prepared to commit the time and funding, before deciding. Here are some key factors to consider:

- Time commitment: Some postgraduate programmes may require you to undertake studies for 1 to 2 years (masters) or up to 4 years full time and 6 years part-time (PhD).
- Outcome:
  - When researching postgraduate programmes, think about how you feel this would benefit you.
  - Define what you hope to achieve because of doing further study and then investigate whether the course(s) you are considering are likely to lead you there.

- Consider the reputation of the institution, department and the course.
- Ask Others:
  - Leverage LinkedIn to find people who have studied the course and look at their career paths before and after the course:
    - Did it lead them to where you want to go?
    - What was their background before the course?
    - Where are they working now?
  - Talk to academic staff who are working in your desired area.
  - Book a 1-1 career appointment with your careers consultant.
- Course Logistics:
  - Research track record of your supervisor (for postgraduate research)
  - Clarify funding options with our [PDF resource guide](#)
  - Closing dates to apply for courses/PhDs and to apply for funding
  - When offers are made
  - The timeframe for accepting offers
  - Language requirements

## **Cracking the PhD Code**

If you are interested in pursuing a career in an academic or research and development environment, you will find that a PhD is often an essential requirement. Choosing and preparing for the PhD application can be challenging and therefore, take time to prepare.

## **PhDs Around the Globe and What To Expect**

The structure of a PhD varies from country to country and therefore it is important to look at the differences:

- Ireland/UK: thesis of 80-100,000 words; a private oral examination with varying stringency
- Nordic Countries: 3 - 5 publications required

- USA: rotation and advanced courses in addition to research
- Germany: oral examination on broad range of topics plus research
- France, Netherlands: Public examination

### **The Irish Structured PhD: What's the Deal?**

In Ireland, a structured PhD is more than just original research. It's an integrated programme focusing on:

- Formalised integrated programme of education, training, personal and professional development
- Discipline specific knowledge, research skills and generic/transferable skills
- Declared outcomes and graduate attributes in line with national and international best practice
- Designed to meet an employment market that is wider than academia

### **Choosing a PhD Project**

When choosing a PhD topic you may want to think about the following:

- Subject interest
- Specific career choice
- Broader career choice
- Enjoy the academic environment
- Choose a problem that interests you

### **Choosing a supervisor**

During your PhD your supervisor will act as adviser and mentor who will be providing support throughout your PhD. Choosing a supervisor is an important step when opting for PhD and you need to consider this:

- Take into consideration your work style
- Talk to former and current students
- Visit the research group or laboratory

## Nailing that PhD Application

Writing a PhD application takes a substantial amount of time, therefore, taking time to prepare is essential. Here are the following things you want to consider:

- **Start early-** It is important to start thinking about your PhD application early due to availability of opportunities, for example, funding deadlines and advertised PhD positions.
- **Do your research-** Think about what institution you would like to undertake your research, location, research topic and what kind of supervisor is required to assist you in your research.
- **Contact your potential supervisor and/or institution**
- **Present yourself effectively on paper-** Take time to write your PhD application as you want to highlight your motivation, knowledge and suitability for conducting PhD. You will have an opportunity to talk about this in your personal statement.

## Personal statements

Personal statements form a core part of applications for further study. They help to convey a sense of your passion, personality, and intellectual drive. In addition, a well-written statement should provide the selection committee with an insight into your motivation and rationale for the proposed graduate study programme that is not otherwise communicated in the rest of the application materials.

Your goal is to present a compelling argument as to why you should be considered for the programme, built on a foundation of concrete evidence of your aptitude and suitability. Keep your statement concise to provide precise and relevant information.

## Must-Haves For Your Personal Statement

Every course has their own specific requirements for a personal statement, make sure to read these carefully and address the topics they want to read about in your statement. Below is a list of the key elements that usually form part of a personal statement

- Interest-demonstrate your interest in the course and outline any evidence of this interest – academic and personal.
- Motivation - explain why this is the field of your choice, and why you want to study at this university/department
- Unique contribution - your personal strengths and experience which you believe will help you to enjoy and succeed in this course at college.
- Relevant experience - employment, work experience, placement or voluntary work which you consider support your application.
- Relevant extracurricular experience- sporting, hobbies, social activities and any other interests or achievements that are relevant and may support your future performance in the position for which you are applying.
- Any other information which you believe supports your application.
- The three key things to communicate are generally: Why me? Why here? Why now?

### **Top Tips for Your Personal Statement**

- Ensure that you have addressed the most important issues and in appropriate depth
- Use clear, concise and professional language. Active language is always effective, for example verbs such as ‘implemented’ and ‘delegated’.
- Make sure the structure of the text is clear and logical.
- Have your final personal statement reviewed by your Careers Consultant to get feedback on your content and/or proofread by a fresh pair of eyes to identify typing, spelling or grammatical errors.
- When you have finished, save a copy of your completed application and keep this: it will help you to prepare for interview and apply for other courses.

### **Personal Statement Tools:**

Leverage the [Mind Map](#) to guide you on what to include in your personal statement.

This [Worksheet](#) is designed to help you think about information you might include in your statement. Useful in conjunction with the Personal Statement Mind Map.

- [gradireland: Information about further study and personal statements](#)
- [Prospects: A UK based website with information about personal statements for postgraduate applications](#)
- [UCAS: A step by step guide produced by UCAS that takes you through key sections of a Personal Statement](#)

### **Admission Tests: Show What You Know**

Some postgraduate courses require you to complete an admissions test, either online or in-person. They are used by course selectors to assess how well a candidate's attributes match those required to do well on the course (and future career in this area). Your admissions test score is considered, along with other important factors such as your academic record, personal statement and academic references.

Overview of common postgraduate admissions tests:

#### **GRE**

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is typically used for selection to university postgraduate programmes in the US, Canada and Australia, as well as Business and Law School masters' programmes and other postgraduate programmes in other countries including Ireland and the UK. The GRE General Test measures your verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and analytical writing skills and is relevant to a range of graduate programmes. The full test takes two hours.

There are also some GRE Subject Tests, which measure your knowledge in Maths, Physics and Psychology. ETS, the company that administers the tests, is committed to serving test takers with disabilities and health-related needs by providing services and reasonable accommodations that are appropriate given the purpose of the test. Explore more details on the GRE tests, preparing and booking [HERE](#).

## GMAT

The GMAT exam is required by many Institutions for entry to postgraduate Business School programmes. It focuses on assessing specific skills required in a graduate Business education and your GMAT score is evaluated alongside other considerations, such as academic grades, your personal statement, work experience, extra-curricular activities and academic references. The exam takes **2 hours and 15 minutes** to complete and can be taken at a test centre or online, with 64 questions in total:

- Quantitative Reasoning: 21 questions, 45 minutes
- Verbal Reasoning: 23 questions, 45 minutes
- Data Insights: 20 questions, 45 minutes

[Read more about the exam structure](#)

[An online resource to help you prepare for the exam](#)

[Complete this free mini quiz](#)

[Information on how much time it may take to prepare for GMAT](#)

## GAMSAT

The Graduate Record Exam (GAMSAT) is one of the main admissions tests used for selection of students to participate in graduate-entry Medicine and allied health programmes (e.g. Physiotherapy) in Ireland, the UK and Australia\*. The purpose of the GAMSAT is to assess your ability to understand and analyse written and graphically presented material. GAMSAT measures skills and knowledge acquired over a long period of time, as well as the ability to reason, make logical deductions and form judgments. The test includes three parts Written Communication (2 essays), Humanities and Social Sciences (62 multiple choice questions), Biological and Physical Sciences (75 multiple choice questions) with a total test time of 5.25 hours. Apply for reasonable adjustments as needed.

\* Other course providers in the U.K., Australia and New Zealand may use the UCAT.

[Explore details on the GMAT test, exam preparation and registration](#)

[About the University Clinical Aptitude Test \(UCAT\) | UCAT Consortium](#) - UCAT Admissions test

## **LSAT**

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is typically used for selection to Law Schools in the US, Canada, and some other countries. The LSAT consists of four 35-minute sections of multiple-choice questions and an unscored writing section.

The multiple-choice sections measure the ability to think critically, analyse and evaluate the reasoning and arguments of others, and read complex texts with understanding and insight. LSAT Argumentative Writing is administered separately from the multiple-choice portion of the test. LSAC, the organisation who administers the test, offers a wide range of options for individuals with disabilities who require accommodations for taking the test including additional testing time, additional break time, and alternate testing formats such as paper-and-pencil or braille printed tests.

[Explore details on the LSAT, exam preparation and registration](#)