

Applicants need to assess whether the offered PhD is appropriate for them

What does a PhD applicant need to know before they accept the opportunity to be supervised by you? It is important that both of you make an informed decision, and you certainly want to avoid the student resigning from the position because it wasn't what

they expected. Some supervisors arrange for a PhD applicant to meet with other PhD students in the research group. This is an opportunity for the applicant to find out more about the place, the people and the supervisor. Before an applicant makes a final decision, you should ensure that they know about issues that include, but are not limited, to the following:

Supervision and working arrangements

- Expected working hours
- Expected frequency of meetings
- Amount of assistance that they can expect to receive in relation to e.g. conceptualisation, refining questions, methods, discussion, feedback
- How will the research questions be developed, refined and decided? (This is really about degree of independence and autonomy: some students have an exaggerated view of how much freedom they'll have; some supervisors have exaggerated views about how much and how little freedom a student can have! Nevertheless, the applicant needs to know in advance, and make an informed decision.)
- If there are co-supervisors, what will their roles be?
- Will there be close interaction with other research partners e.g. other universities, private industry and what will these partners contribute, and how will they share credit for this?
- Will there be issues about intellectual property that will affect the dissemination and publication of results?
- Is the PhD one part of a larger project that will necessitate additional commitments (travelling, presenting results, meetings, reporting)?
- What variety and number of research outputs are expected? e.g. how many seminars, conference papers, journal articles, patents?
- Are they expected to assist with the:
 - Organisation and delivery of laboratory sessions for undergraduates?
 - Organisation and delivery of tutorials for undergraduate or postgraduate students?
 - Organisation of a major conference that you have planned?
 - Delivery of lectures?
 - Writing of research proposals?
 - Supervision of final-year undergraduate students and their 'mini-projects'?