

Postgraduate Study

Kimberley Hill
PhD Student

Oxford Brookes University

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Timeline

- **2007 - Bsc. Psychology (Hons)**
Student Loan, Part-Time Work, Academic Excellence Scholarship
- **2010 - Master of Research in Psychology**
Self-Funded, Part-Time Work, PGT-PGR Prize
- **2011 - PhD in Psychology and Healthcare**
Doctoral Training Programme Studentship

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How can contemporary ideas about affordances and embodied, embedded cognition be used to prevent alcohol misuse in young adults?

- **THE PHD:** Full-time PhD (3 years), based in the Department of Psychology, Health and Social Care.
- **DAILY TASKS:** writing research proposals, reports and ethics forms, conducting and analysing research, publishing articles, designing conference presentations and posters, attending seminars, arranging meetings and writing up meeting minutes. I also teach on undergraduate and postgraduate modules, organise training sessions and present research at conferences.
- **CONTRACT:** 35 hours per week, but this is flexible. Most of my research is conducted at weekends and I live quite a way from Oxford, so I work from home on Fridays.

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Full-Time PhD Timetable

YEAR 1: Register as MPhil -> Research Proposal -> Lit Reviews -> Stage 1 Ethics -> Conduct Research and Analysis -> End of Year Review

YEAR 2: Stage 2 and 3 Ethics -> Complete Thesis Chapters -> Conduct Research and Analysis -> Transfer to DPhil (PhD) -> End of Year Review

YEAR 3: Finish Third Stage of Research -> Complete Thesis -> Submit Thesis (Sciences 40,000 word limit, Humanities 100,000 word limit) -> Year 3 Review -> Viva examination

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Applying for a PhD

- **APPLY EARLY:** Most PhDs start in late September
- **DO YOUR RESEARCH:** I began researching Psychology related PhD opportunities in the second year of my undergraduate degree
- **INTEREST - MAKE SURE** it is something you are interested in as you will be studying it for at least three years!
- **2010 -** Applied for a PhD without my Masters, shortlisted for interview, not successful.
- **Completed my Masters and applied for current PhD in January 2011.** Shortlisted for interview in March, notified as successful, started PhD in late September.

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The Application Form...

- **Qualifications, training and relevant experience**
- **Personal Statement**
 - Your chance to stand out and 'sell yourself' as the best candidate for this PhD
 - Read the proposal and/or research title carefully, state your interest and why you are applying
 - Outline your relevant academic achievements and any research experience or related projects
 - Illustrate key skills and give examples where you have demonstrated these: e.g. time management, networking, organisational skills, personal efficiency, leadership...
 - Provide details of any Student Rep roles, or societies you have been involved with
 - Let your dedication and drive shine through your writing, the panel will want to know that you are able to finish the PhD on time, particularly if it is a funded place.
- **Research Proposal**
 - Sometimes provided and you have to consider the best methods for the project, otherwise a title is provided and you have to produce a proposal.
 - Contact the supervisor! If you apply early most will be happy to help. Meet with them if possible and discuss the project and any questions you may have. Some are very busy and may not have time, if this is the case at least drop them an email.
- **References** - get these sorted out as soon as possible, as these are likely to delay your application

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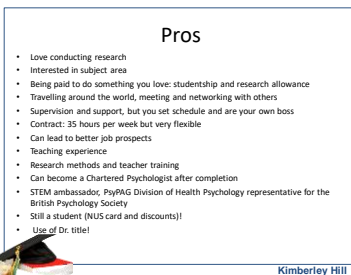


The Interview

- **Keep calm:** They have short-listed you because your application has stood out
- **Prepare:** Know your proposal and the references inside out. Practise questions with colleagues and friends
- **Be confident (even if you do not feel it!):** Greet each member of the panel with a handshake and a smile.
- The panel will have read your application and will have prepared a number of questions.
- Listen to each question carefully and do not be afraid to ask the panel questions.
- Show your enthusiasm and interest for completing a PhD and that you can realistically complete it within the time frame.
- Prepare some questions for the end of the interview e.g. training opportunities, seminars, office hours etc...this will show that you are keen.

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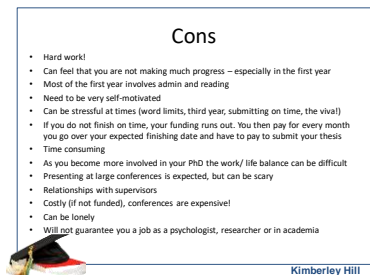


Pros

- Love conducting research
- Interested in subject area
- Being paid to do something you love: studentship and research allowance
- Travelling around the world, meeting and networking with others
- Supervision and support, but you set schedule and are your own boss
- Contract: 35 hours per week but very flexible
- Can lead to better job prospects
- Teaching experience
- Research methods and teacher training
- Can become a Chartered Psychologist after completion
- STEM ambassador, PsyPAG Division of health Psychology representative for the British Psychology Society
- Still a student (NUS card and discounts!)
- Use of Dr. title!

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Cons

- Hard work!
- Can feel that you are not making much progress - especially in the first year
- Most of the first year involves admin and reading
- Need to be very self-motivated
- Can be stressful at times (word limits, third year, submitting on time, the viva!)
- If you do not finish on time, your funding runs out. You then pay for every month you go over your expected finishing date and have to pay to submit your thesis
- Time consuming
- As you become more involved in your PhD the work/ life balance can be difficult
- Presenting at large conferences is expected, but can be scary
- Relationships with supervisors
- Costly (if not funded), conferences are expensive!
- Can be lonely
- Will not guarantee you a job as a psychologist, researcher or in academia

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Need to Know...

- It takes time to apply for a PhD, so the earlier you can start the better!
- Speak to your current supervisor and contact current PhD students
- Most PhD offers are for a 2:1 or higher
- Masters not essential, but may be desired
- Funding available from a wide range of sources, including charities, universities and employers. This may limit you to a university and/or topic
- Some Departments have hidden pots of money which can be used to fund PhD students, so ask!
- It is possible to self-fund using savings. More likely to get favoured topic, university and/ or supervisor. Be aware of hidden costs (e.g. printing and conferences etc...).
- Some universities waive fees if you work for them and study part-time (5-7 years)
- There are a large number of support groups (e.g. University careers services and PayPAG postgraduate group)



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Questions?

Contact me: kimberley.hill-2011@brookes.ac.uk

More about me:
<http://www.psychology.brookes.ac.uk/research/students/kimberley-hill>



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