

## Research Degree Interviews: What to Expect

All research degree applicants must be interviewed before we make an offer for a place on our research degree programmes.

### Why do we interview?

The purpose of an interview is to assess your suitability for research, your motivation and your preparedness. It's also an opportunity for you to learn more about being a researcher at Kingston and to meet the key people you would be working with.

For studentship applications, the interview will also help the panel to rank the candidates.

### When will the interview take place?

Suitable candidates are invited to interview after an initial assessment of their application and research proposals (where applicable), this includes whether we have potential supervisors available in the subject area. You will be invited via email and should be given at least one week's notice.

### What will be the format of the interview?

Most of our interviews are conducted online using Teams. If you cannot use Teams or prefer to meet face-to-face please request this in response to the interview invitation. We will accommodate your needs where possible.

The invitation to interview should include the following details:

- Date and time
- Format (online or in person)
- Location or online meeting link
- Duration (usually between 30 and 60 minutes)
- Interview panel – there will be at least two interviewers, one of whom will usually be your potential supervisor. You can view staff profiles on our website: [A-Z of academic staff profiles](#).
- Presentation requirement and length
- Portfolio requirement (if applicable)
- A contact point if you have any questions in advance of the interview

### What will be discussed?

The focus of individual interviews will depend on your research area and the information you've provided in your application, but here are some topics commonly covered by interviewers:

- Your motivation for choosing the research area and for studying at Kingston.
- Your research proposal
- Existing research and/or literature in this field

- Your methodology
- Timescales – how you expect to complete the project within the time allowed
- Your academic background, skills, and relevant experience, from either study or work
- Technical questions, if appropriate for your subject area
- Any training needs you have already identified
- Practical considerations, such as access to labs and equipment
- What you hope to get out of your research degree, including career plans following completion
- How you plan to manage your time and how a research degree will fit with your current commitments. This is to ensure that you understand the level of commitment involved and how it may impact your lifestyle.
- How you will fund any tuition fees required
- Any bench fees that will be charged
- What is expected of you as a postgraduate researcher

Remember you can ask for clarification if the question is not clear. The interview is an opportunity for you to find out more about your supervisors, about the research interests of the academic department, and about what will be expected from postgraduate research study at Kingston. It's a good idea to have some questions for your interviewers prepared in advance. You may want to know about training provided, opportunities to attend conferences, and the research community you will be joining.

### **Presentation**

Most subject areas will ask you to prepare a short presentation on your research proposal or your previous research experience. Guidance will be given as to the subject, length and format when you are sent the interview invitation.

See Adjustments for candidates with disabilities below for possible accommodations.

### **What to bring**

You might want to prepare some notes to refer to in the interview. You may also want to note any feedback you receive during the interview. It's therefore a good idea to bring some paper and a pen, or an electronic device you can take notes on.

Some subject areas will ask interviewees to bring a sample of their work, for example, a fine art portfolio.

### **Adjustments for candidates with disabilities**

If you have a disability or other need for adjustments, for example, a Long-Term Health Condition or Specific Learning Difference (SpLD), please let our staff know when you are invited to interview. We are happy to make adjustments to ensure you are comfortable and so we can get to know you at your best.

Examples of adjustments that can be made are below. This list is not complete and you may suggest adjustments yourself:

- Physical access considerations if it is an in-person interview eg step free access

- A sign language interpreter or interpreter for speech differences
- Requesting the interview be at a specific time (within business hours) to fit with the effects of medications or physical symptoms.
- Opportunity for ten minute informal pre-meet with the chair of the panel directly prior to the interview to check technology and ask questions
- Closed captions turned on for online Teams interviews
- Requests for cameras to be turned off during online Teams interviews
- Provision of the type of questions in advance may be possible for those with disabilities that impact processing speed or organisation of thought. Note that follow-up questions will also be asked that will not be provided in advance, however, you are welcome to write these down and have processing time to help comprehend the question.
- To ask for comfort breaks or extra time where a disability affects attention or causes fatigue.
- To be allowed time to write down the question
- To bring someone with you who can take notes for you
- To ask for clarification if the question is not clear
- To ask for the question to be repeated and take the time necessary to answer and not feel rushed.
- To have only a single short question at a time and not use questions with multiple parts. This helps with auditory working memory, processing speed and sequencing difficulties.
- To ensure the interviewers are aware that some conditions can mean that answers to questions appear discursive and/or tangential. Should this happen, they should gently point this out and restate the original question.
- For interviewers to be aware that students with disabilities that affect memory may make more frequent use of notes and prompts to respond to questions.
- Letting you know if you have said enough in an answer so you can move on to the next question.
- Request to pre-record your presentation, or for a written alternative to be allowed for students with speech differences.

Should you be offered a place on a Research Degree at Kingston University following your interview and you have a Disability, we recommend that you register with the [Disability and Mental Health Service](#) ahead of enrolment to ensure the support that you need is in place. For further information, please email [disability@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:disability@kingston.ac.uk)

### **How is an interview evaluated?**

The interview panel will be looking at the following:

- Whether your research project can be supported by KU (in terms of all resources and equipment required until completion, including supervision)
- The strength of your research proposal, how it will contribute to current knowledge, and what impact your research could have on society in the future

- If your project is manageable within 3 years of full-time research or 6 years part-time research for a PhD; 2 years full-time/4 years part-time for MPhil, and 1 year full-time/2 years part-time for a Masters by Research.
- How your qualifications and skills have prepared you for independent research
- Your understanding of the research area
- Your understanding of what a research degree at your level (PhD/MPhil/Masters by Research) involves.

### **What happens next?**

The Faculty Research Student Coordinator for your faculty will email you to confirm the decision, normally **within one week** if you are applying for a self-funded place, or by the deadline stated in the advertisement if you are applying for a funded place. A formal offer letter will be sent if you are offered a place.

If you are offered a place but have not yet provided references, any offer will be subject to receipt of satisfactory references.

Graduate Research School, January 2025