

Making an application to IGGI: Q&As

Applying to IGGI

Q: When's the deadline for applying ?

A: You need to complete and submit your application, by or before the deadline of 23:59 GMT on 31st January 2021. Details are on the IGGI website here <https://iggi.org.uk/apply>

Q: If we are planning to work on our current work or idea as a PhD project, is it possible to have our current supervisor (from another university) as the co-supervisor ?

A: Yes. Your first supervisor would need to be at your home university (i.e. York or QMUL) but you *can* have a second supervisor based at another university. Your primary academic relationship must be with the supervisor from York or QMUL, though, and you would have to be based at the same institution. It is not possible to use IGGI funding to in practice remain working at your current institution, and your research would have to be firmly within the remit of IGGI.

Q: With regards to location, would we be expected to be stationed at Queen Mary University of London or at the University of York? Or is it dependent on the location of your supervisor.

A: There is a requirement for you to be based at the same location as your primary supervisor (i.e. at York or QMUL, London).

Q: If accepted, can you defer for a year? Or is it better to just apply next year?

A: Yes, you can defer for a year if accepted. However, if you want to join in 2022/23 we recommend that you apply next year. We have studentships available for the following year and applying knowing that you wish to defer may deprive someone else of a studentship who is able to start this year.

Q: Any age requirements for the studentships?

A: There are no age restrictions for the studentships, other than being old enough to have at least an undergraduate degree. We have had students join us straight from an undergraduate degree at the age of 21 and others join us after long successful careers. We are more interested in the right person doing the right project rather than your age when you apply.

Q: I am actually interested in doing a PhD in Games because I wish to get into academia and maybe industry research. Can we indicate this as potential reasons to pursue PhD in Games?

A: Yes, absolutely. The IGGI Programme is a suitable route into the games industry or games research in academia.

Q: For the connections with industry section, is emailing industry partners now to discuss how your research might benefit them advisable?

A: Probably not unless you can be very specific about your proposed research. But if you do contact industry, keep the proposal short and to the point, since they are busy and you want a positive response. It is useful to indicate if you do already have a relationship with a relevant company, but you do not have to have an existing relationship. You just need to have a clear idea of which companies your proposed research would be suitable for.

Q: I have been advised in the past that I may need a MA in a relevant subject. I am coming from a background in game art and have equivalent industry experience and an MA in Fine Art (am coding in UE4 blueprints).

A: You do not need a MA in a relevant subject. We have accepted students on the IGGI programme from a range of backgrounds such as linguistics, environmental science, health science, psychology, etc. You do need to be able to code, and it can be useful for a student to have a Masters degree, but you can join the programme with an undergraduate degree at 2:1 or equivalent.

Q: I am currently a student who is on a master's degree to create games, so I have the technical background, but I don't have one in research. Is this a profile that would interest you?

A: Yes. The PhD programme will equip you with the skills necessary to do research. In the first instance, your chosen IGGI supervisor can help you develop your research proposal for your application to IGGI, guiding you on what is suitable as a research question and what is not. Don't forget that a PhD is about learning to do research - if you were already well-versed in research, you would not need to do the PhD!

Q: Can we report our Duolingo score? The Ilets exam has been cancelled in Iran due to covid-19.

A: Yes, the Universities accept a range of different language certifications and Duolingo has been added to the approved list for the University of York this year. QMUL does not currently accept Duolingo, though it may be helpful to contact their admissions department to check in case their policy changes in light of the current situations.

You can find the requirements for each site as follows:

[University of York requirements are here](#). IGGI is based in the Department of Computer Science so you will need to look at the Computer Science requirements.

[The QMUL requirements are here](#). IGGI is based in the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science at QMUL so you will need to look at those requirements

Q: There will be complications with gathering certificates as my university was subject to cyber attacks at the start of the year, will this inhibit the application process? Current lecturers at the university are willing to make predictions, yet nothing official of previous grades can be gathered at this moment.

Q: If I can't get my postgraduate grades before the deadline, will it be a big problem? My first term grades might come out later than the deadline.

A: Please provide as much information as you can at the time of your application which can include predicted grades. It is in your interests to provide everything required and to ensure the documents are the official transcripts etc. However, we know that on occasions this is not possible, so provide the best evidence that you can. Further on in the recruitment process, around March 2021, if we recommend you for a studentship, you will need the formal documents to apply for your place at the institution your supervisor is based at.

Q: How many professional/academic letters of reference (if any) do we need to apply?

A: You will need two letters of reference for the admissions process. These must be provided as part of your application to the institution, which happens after you are recommended for an IGGI studentship. You are welcome to submit references as part of your application for a studentship, but these are not key pieces of evidence as we will ensure we compare all applications on the same terms and not all applications will include references.

Q: I'm working closely with a member of IGGI staff - does he count as a recommender?

A: You do not need to be recommended to apply for IGGI. A member of the core IGGI team could be your intended supervisor, in which case another member of the core team will be involved in assessing your application as well. We will always ensure appropriate and fair scrutiny from the team for applicants whether their supervisor is part of the core IGGI team or not.

Q: I have poor undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA) but better postgraduate GPA grades. How much do the poor grades matter?

Q: Because it's four years, I assume you would consider applicants with only a Bachelors more than standard PhDs might?

Q: Is a Masters with a 'distinction' required or is a 'merit' acceptable?

A: We will consider applications with a Bachelors or applications with poor undergraduate grades but better postgraduate grades. When assessing your application substantial weight is given to the strength of your research proposal. If you have the appropriate background and the research proposal is strong, you will have as good a chance as any with your application. If you 'only' have an undergraduate degree, as long as you have at least a 2:1 or equivalent, you are eligible to apply. Equally if your undergraduate results were not as strong but you have successfully completed a Masters and shown a much better performance at this level, then we will be happy to consider your application. It is not necessary to have a Masters with Distinction, either, though your application may not look as strong if you have only just managed to pass a Masters degree. However if that was a while ago and you have since gained relevant experience, you may still be eligible to apply.

Q: Will there be any future events with the supervisors who weren't able to make this one?

A: We do not have plans to hold another event with supervisors this application cycle. However, the profiles of potential supervisors are on the IGGI website so please take a look at these. Also, some supervisors have provided project proposals and these too are available on the IGGI website. You can of course also approach potential supervisors with your own project

Q: I missed a lot because I was caught up with work, is there any material I can use to catch up from this morning?

A: Many of the questions that were asked during the day and the answers provided by IGGI staff have been captured in this Q&A document.

Developing your research proposal & application

Q: Should we mention relevant connections within our application?

A: If this is relevant to your research proposal, then yes. Otherwise it might be better to place these in your CV.

Q: If I have a research area that I'm interested in but doesn't have a research topic, is it ok to contact a potential supervisor, to discuss a potential research topic?

A: Yes, please make contact with a potential supervisor.

Q Do IGGI students have a really definite idea to start with, or a vague one that got developed as they discussed with their intended supervisors?

A: There is a real mix. Some people have definite ideas and others will have a vague idea to begin with. In almost all cases, once a potential supervisor is on board, the ideas will be revised and finessed. You will also find that the research proposal that you start with will not be exactly the same as your final thesis - your ideas will naturally evolve as you progress through your PhD.

Q: Can you expand upon potential research within healthcare/therapeutics. Is this a marginal concern that needs to be packaged into something more like a commercial product? Or do you have partners that work directly with healthcare providers?

A: We have students who are working on research in the area of health (especially mental health) and there is no expectation that they are working towards a commercial product. A PhD is about contributing original knowledge, not about creating a novel or commercial product. We do have some partners who are working in areas allied to health, but there is always scope for a new partner to come onboard if you identify a company that might be better suited to work with you on your project.

Q: I'm quite interested in the D&I aspect, but I think my approach is more social science and the art side of development - I'm worried I wouldn't have enough of a Science/Tech side for funding?

A: If you are unsure if your research interests, the best course of action is to contact iggi-admin@york.ac.uk outlining your research interest and academic/employment background. We can then help to guide you with either focusing your project in a way that does fit with IGGI or recommending other PhD funding options that might be better suited for you. We can also help you to identify a potential supervisor who will help you to hone your ideas and decide your best course of action.

Q: My subject would rather focus on management, i.e. how to manage a studio to help the production of a game. However, I have a technical background, I do game art, tech art,

programming and game design. So I will also address pipeline points for example. Even if it is quite far from science or technology, would that match?

A: Again the best approach is to talk to us directly. It may be that your research proposal would fit the IGGI remit, but it could also be that you would be better served with another research programme. A subject that seems on the edges of IGGI is not necessarily out of scope, if approached in the right way.

Q: If a project idea is applicable to more than one area of game design, which would we explore in the context of the proposal?

A: Set out your project proposal in the clearest way you can. It is ok to indicate that the idea could apply to a number of different areas of game design, but to focus on the one that is most interesting to you. If you are to research a subject for 4+years, you need to make sure you are working on something that can hold your interest! Again, your intended supervisor will be able to help you decide what area to focus on.

Q: I am more interested in the progression and development of immersion, virtual worlds and escapism as opposed to making a specific game. Do you think there are still ample employability opportunities in this area?

A: Simply - yes. And this is certainly more suitable for an IGGI research proposal than intending to work on a game! If you want to work on a PhD, find the subject that you are passionate about and earn your PhD. After that, there are lots of opportunities in the games industry and in allied industries, and even if there is not the right opportunity for you now, the outcome of your research could demonstrate the need for opportunities based on your research.

Self-funded applications

Q: Any places for non scholarships?

A: You can apply as a self-funded student at any time. However, IGGI only has one point of entry each year, at the start of the academic year. Applications received before the end of April should be processed in time for a student to begin at the start of the same academic year. Applications received after this date may not be processed in time.

To apply now for a self-funded place:

For York, please go to:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/courses/search?q=iggi&level=postgraduate&mode=research>

For QMUL, please go to:

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/applying-for-a-phd/>

Studentships & funding

Q: Regarding the studentships, what are the differences between UK and EU students?

A: For 2021/22 entry the same funding rules apply to EU and International students. If you are in receipt of a studentship, you will receive a stipend, your fees will be covered (whatever your fee status) and your mandatory travel will be covered, as will some experimental costs and discretionary conference travel. Our funder has placed a limit on the number of studentships we can give to EU and International candidates, so the competition is stronger for you if you are in these groups, but the limit has at least been increased from 10% to 30%, from September 2021.

Q: Does every student that is accepted also qualify for the stipend?

A: We have 12 funded studentships available for 2021/22. If you are recommended for a studentship this will include the stipend for all 4 years of your registration with us.

Q: Is the funding enough or does it require grant writing and application during the PhD? Also, is there sufficient/manageable funding for international students too?

Q: Does the scholarship cover all the living costs in the UK ?

A: A studentship will cover all of the university fees and will pay a stipend towards your living expenses. For 2020/21 the stipend is £15,285 for students at institutions based outside London, while for London based institutions the stipend is £17,285 this year. The stipend is tax and national insurance free. Our students receive their stipends in 4 equal amounts throughout the year, at the start of each quarter.

The funding from EPSRC is intended to be enough to cover your living costs so that you can focus on your research exclusively. Our students do sometimes take on graduate teaching assistant work, but that is as much about the experience as it is about the funding. You are definitely not expected to be applying for grants, and you are expected by EPSRC not to take on significant work outside of the PhD as that is detrimental to your PhD work that they are funding you to do.

If you are an international or EU student in receipt of an IGGI studentship, your fees will be covered - you will not be charged for the difference between the Home fees that EPSRC covers and the University International fees. It is our job to ensure the difference is covered.

Q: Are there things like teaching assistantships available or can we receive external funding, like some USA programs do?

A: We do not have graduate teaching assistantships per se, though it is possible to apply for GTA work on a yearly basis. We cannot guarantee that you would receive enough teaching work to cover your costs if you are not in receipt of an IGGI studentship. You could apply for external funding if you are not successful with your application for an IGGI studentship. It would need to be external funding as neither York nor QMUL will award other studentships for IGGI since we already have funding available.

Q: Do the Phd students have some insurance or pension from the programme?

Q: Will the student be employed by the university? Will they have insurance etc?

A: PhD students do not receive a pension or insurance. It is not necessary for students to have health insurance, as they are covered by the National Health Service. Students do have to pay a healthcare surcharge as part of their visa application - paying this fee gives full access to the NHS. The cost of the visa application and the healthcare surcharge cannot be covered by IGGI. To see if you need to pay, please see www.gov.uk

Q: I'm French, and there is something called the "cifre", that allow a studio to finance a student in France. Does a similar kind of funding, via a studio, exist in the UK?

A: It is possible for a student to be funded fully by a company, however we have not had any students funded this way so far. If you are able to find a company prepared to fully fund you, we would be happy to consider your application. We find most collaborations with industry are more successful if the initial approach is made by the student, as the alignment between the company's interests and those of the student is usually easier to achieve.

IGGI Programme - General

Q: You said that it's a 4 year program with an integrated Masters, does that mean we graduate with an MA/MSc and a PhD?

A: You will not graduate with a MA/MSc even if you leave the IGGI Programme early. You can only graduate with a PhD.

Q: What happens if we are funded and we finish our PhD in 3 years?

A: It isn't likely that you will finish in 4 years, given the extra requirements built into the IGGI programme. However, if an early finish is a possibility, you might choose to use the final year of the programme to enhance your research by writing more papers and attending conferences etc. If you have truly finished more than 6 months before the end of your normal registration period, formal permission will need to be sought for you to submit your thesis early. This has to be approved by your supervisor and the Chair of the Board of Studies or equivalent in the department in which you are based.

Q: Do IGGI scholars sometimes take longer than 4 years to finish their PhD?

A: Yes, IGGI students do sometimes take longer than 4 years to finish their PhD. There are 4 years of funding plus an allowed unfunded write-up year. Some students will take all of the final unfunded year. It all depends on how your research progresses, and how you and your supervisor decide to plan your activities and where you plan to place your emphasis.

Q: Is it suitable or is the structure different for someone already working in industry who would be part time and self-funded?

Q: Is it possible to switch to part time if we were able to get a job over the course of the program?

A: The IGGI Programme is not normally delivered as a part time programme, however it is possible to register as a part time student. If you were to start as a part time student, you would spend your first year focusing on the core modules. You may find it challenging as the

16 weeks of core modules are delivered in 8 x 2 week blocks throughout the first year, with the first 3 blocks delivered back to back as a 6 week bootcamp. Please contact info@iggi.org.uk with your particular circumstances and to request further information about part-time study.

Q: Which department is going to be mentioned on the PhD after one receives it?

A: The department isn't mentioned on the certificate. It will simply state the degree (PhD in Intelligent Games and Game Intelligence) and the awarding institution. However, for reference, if you do the IGGI Programme at York the home department is the Department of Computer Science. If you do the IGGI Programme at QMUL, the home department is the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science.

Q: Is there a particular requirement as the final output? Does it have to be a game at the end or could be method/framework as well?

A: The key requirement is the production of a thesis. You and your supervisor may agree that other things need to be produced in the development of your thesis, but the thesis is the crucial thing. A PhD is fundamentally about the creation of new knowledge; by the end of your PhD, you will be the expert in your particular research.

Q: Could I ask if the proposed research project focuses on player research, is it expected for the PhD candidate to create/programme the platform of which the research is done on? Or will there be labs or industry partners that assist with that aspect. Thank you!

A: You may create a programme in order to do your research, if you want very controlled variables, for example. However, it may be perfectly feasible to conduct your research with existing games and platforms. We encourage you to think carefully about the question you want to explore, the skills you have and want to acquire, and design your research to suit both of those parameters. We do not have labs or industry partners to help build materials you may need. Unfortunately we simply do not have the resources to fund that kind of activity. It may be possible, however, for you to collaborate with other students whose research is complementary to yours - you may be able to build something together that meets both of your experimental needs.

Q: Is it harder to work with 3 supervisors (if we need to have the third one according to project)?

A: Not really. All have their particular area of expertise that can help support your PhD, and our academic colleagues are respectful of each other and motivated to help students do the best research that they can.

Q: Would we be required to teach courses e.g. to undergraduates?

A: This is not a requirement but it is an option if you would like to do it.

Q: Is an internship part of the programme?

A: We call it many things - placement, knowledge exchange, internship - but yes. You need to complete at least 8 weeks working with a company at some point during your PhD

Q: Is it fine if during the course of PhD IGGI we submit work to international conferences as well? Like apart from just accomplishing a PhD Thesis.

A: Yes, it would be expected that you would write papers for publication in peer reviewed journals and submit papers to conferences over the course of your PhD, and it is a requirement that you at least write something of publishable quality during your PhD. We can provide financial support for you to attend a conference where you are presenting a paper or delivering a workshop. You would need to apply for funds and obtain a supporting statement from your supervisor.

Q: If we get in the program, are we required to submit a certain number of conference/journal papers in order to graduate?

A: No - but typically you would publish some of your work in peer reviewed conferences and journals. There is no target though.

IGGI Programme - Training/Modules

Q: Are the core modules taught September to May during the 1st year?

A: Modules are taught over 6 weeks in the autumn term, starting around mid-October and finishing around the end of November. Modules then start again at the beginning of Feb and end around the end of Feb. There are then around 4 weeks of taught modules from mid-May to mid-June.

Q: Is there a document or other which recapitulates the course a little particular to IGGI? To be able to review it in detail a little later?

A: There is some information here: <https://iggi.org.uk/training>.

Q: Are all core modules delivered as in person only lectures?

A: Yes, these are normally delivered as in person only lectures, though this year they have been online due to Covid. Once the Universities return to all in person teaching, all IGGI students will be required to be physically present in the classroom for the modules. The modules involve group work with your cohort and are therefore a really good opportunity to build friendships and a support network with your peers.

Q: What has the programme looked like this year and last with the COVID pandemic? Are there plans for how the programme may look or change for the next year?

Q: Regardless of COVID-19, is there any option for remote study if there is a need for it? Either temporary or permanent?

Q: How has COVID affected the program? For instance, it is possible to do the entire PhD remotely now or have students had to take time off?

A: The programme has been moved entirely online this year. We've run it through discord/zoom/other online teaching methods. We are only allowed to be online during the pandemic; as soon as we are allowed to be back in person, the Universities will expect us to be back in person. The Universities require students to be present at the institution and we want our students to be working together - being in the same space makes a difference to the learning experience and to the strength of the support networks that students build. But we can make a case for students who live close enough to be at the institution for a meeting

the next day, rather than in the same city. So there are a few students who live a bit further away, with special dispensation. As long as you can be present at the modules as required and then you and your supervisor are happy, we can make a case. But the experience will not be as rich as if you were able to be in the office. And this issue of needing to be able to be present at the institution within 24 hours prevents being based internationally.

Q: On the subject of remote access, I noticed York (where I'm a former student) has a distance comp sci PhD but I'm based in east London where QMUL is easy to access. Could those two things work together in my case where I'm likely to be self funded and I'm already working in industry?

A: It is not possible to be part of IGGI and registered on the PhD in Computer Science Distance Learning (CS DL) programme - they are two different programmes and registration on the CS DL programme would make you definitely ineligible for IGGI funding. It would also mean that you would not be formally part of IGGI and therefore the link with QMUL would formally exist for you.

IGGI does not have a distance learning route because we are required by our funder to build a strong cohort, which means students being together. It would be better for your primary supervisor to be at QMUL - then you would be based there - with a secondary supervisor at York or Goldsmiths. However, if you do wish to self-fund, you may want to consider signing up for the distance learning programme, since this is a 3 year PhD programme, and hence there is a year's less cost. It is still possible to become part of the IGGI community without the requirements to complete all the modules or take part in the other mandatory activities, if you were to sign up for a CS DL programme. This is especially likely to happen if your supervisor is already supervising other IGGI students.

Q: Seems like students are required to submit a game within one week. Would it be a huge challenge for people who have no industrial experience at all?

A: There is no need to have industrial experience - many of our students don't. Many of our students are self-taught with coding. And the games that you produce will not be like those you can buy. Rough and ready is expected - it is about what you learn along the way. You will be working in teams when you are required to create games (at the game jam or during modules), so there will always be others to work with to produce something. And you will learn more from each other in the process.

Q: Are we able to select our courses in order to address our individual needs?

A: The core modules are set and have to be taken. However, you can elect to audit courses at your home university to address your needs. After you have joined the IGGI Programme, you should discuss this with your supervisor/s. If you are auditing a module, you will take part in all the teaching, but you will not complete the assessment. You will need permission from the module leader to audit the module.

