

# PHD APPLICATION SERVICE

## ELEMENT SEVEN



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# ZOOM CALL NOTES

## (First 30-Minute Call)

**Purpose:** To gather client preferences and academic/professional background to inform all future deliverables.

### Client Background [FICTIONAL]

- **Name:** *Daniel Thorne*
- **Current Qualification:** MBA in Strategic Management – Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore
- **Work Experience:**
  - 3 years as a Business Analyst at Deloitte
  - 2 years as a Strategy Consultant at a sustainability-focused firm
- **Key Interests:**
  - Business strategy and sustainability
  - Digital transformation in emerging markets
  - Data-driven decision-making in corporate governance

### Motivation for PhD

- Keen interest in developing a career in academia and policy research.
- Wants to explore the intersection of business strategy and environmental sustainability.
- Has authored a paper on ESG practices in emerging economies.
- Aspires to become a lecturer and contribute to global development discourse.

### Research Interests

- Proposed Topic Area:  
“Strategic Innovation and Sustainable Business Models in Emerging Economies”
- Specific Themes Discussed:
  - Corporate sustainability reporting
  - ESG metrics and measurement frameworks
  - Business adaptation to environmental regulations
  - Innovation in low-carbon technologies
- Interest in using mixed methods: qualitative case studies + data analytics.

### University Preferences

- **Preferred Countries:**
  - UK
  - Netherlands
  - Germany
  - Ireland
- **Important Criteria:**
  - Strong sustainability/business ethics faculty
  - Access to data labs or research centres
  - Good funding opportunities

- International exposure and cross-cultural collaboration
- **Preferred University Types:**
  - Research-intensive
  - Globally ranked (Top 150 preferred)
  - Industry-academic collaboration encouraged

### **Potential Supervisor Preferences**

- Interested in working with a supervisor who has:
  - Publications in business sustainability
  - Experience in empirical research
  - Connections to policymaking or think tanks
- Open to co-supervision if research spans sustainability + analytics.

### **Funding Preferences**

- Open to university-level scholarships, Commonwealth funding, and government-funded schemes.
- I would prefer full or majority tuition coverage and a stipend.
- Willing to work as a teaching/research assistant if required.

### **Career Goals**

- Long-term goal: Become a professor and consultant in strategic sustainability.
- Short-term: Publish during PhD, contribute to international conferences, collaborate with NGOs

## **Second Call Notes (30-Minute Follow-up Call)**

### **Purpose of the Call:**

To confirm Daniel's final preferences after reviewing the University Recommendation Report and proceed with the next steps in the application preparation.

### **Final Selections & Confirmations from the Client:**

#### **Chosen PhD Title**

- *"Bridging the ESG Disclosure Gap: Towards a Harmonised Framework for Stakeholder-Centric Reporting in Infrastructure Firms"*

#### **Preferred Universities**

- 1st Choice: University of Cambridge – Judge Business School
- 2nd Choice: University of Oxford – Saïd Business School
- 3rd Choice: University of Warwick – Warwick Business School
- 4th Choice: University of Edinburgh Business School
- 5th Choice: University of Manchester – Alliance Manchester Business School

#### **Selected Supervisors** Cambridge: Dr. Ioannis Ioannou

- Oxford: Dr. Robert Eccles
- Warwick: Dr. Deniz Ucbasaran
- Edinburgh: Dr. Kenneth Amaeshi
- Manchester: Dr. Christopher Humphrey

#### **Preferred Funding Options**

- ESRC DTP Studentships (Warwick & Cambridge)
- Clarendon Fund (Oxford)
- University-Specific PhD Scholarships
- UKRI and Business School-based ESG research grants

#### **Preferred Research Methodology**

- Mixed-method approach with emphasis on:
  - Quantitative content analysis of ESG reports
  - Semi-structured interviews with ESG officers
  - Delphi validation panel for framework testing

#### **Confirmed Interest in Topics**

- Stakeholder-centric ESG reporting

- Policy compliance and transparency gaps
- Comparative ESG frameworks (e.g., GRI, SFDR, TCFD)

### **Other Client Preferences**

- Focus on UK-based infrastructure firms (with possibility to extend to EU)
- Alignment with emerging EU regulatory mandates (e.g., CSRD)
- Strong interest in publishing the findings in high-impact journals