COLD EMAIL TO A PROFESSOR

Templates and guide for funded Master's and PhD positions

Replace everything in [square brackets]. Never send the same email to many professors. Personalise every email.

BEFORE YOU SEND: CHECKLIST

- Visit the professor's lab or faculty page. Check for a "Prospective Students" note and follow any instructions there.
- Read 1–2 of their recent papers (last 2–3 years) so you can mention something specific.
- Check the programme's application deadline and whether it offers application fee waivers.
- Use a professional email address, e.g. firstname.lastname@gmail.com.
- Attach your CV as a PDF named Firstname_Lastname_CV.pdf (and your transcript if you have it).
- Keep it short: about 200–250 words. Professors receive many emails.
- Send one email per professor, Tuesday to Thursday morning in the professor's time zone.

SUBJECT LINE EXAMPLES

- Prospective PhD Student – [Your Research Area] – Fall [Year]
- Inquiry about Funded Master's Position in Your Lab – Fall [Year]
- Prospective Student Interested in Your Work on [Specific Topic]

TEMPLATE 1: MAIN COLD EMAIL

Subject: Prospective PhD Student – [Your Research Area] – Fall [Year]

Dear Professor [Last Name],

I hope this email finds you well. My name is [Full Name], and I am a [current position, e.g. graduate of B.Sc. Computer Engineering] from [University], [Country], with a CGPA of [x.xx]/[5.0]. I am writing to express my interest in joining your research group as a [PhD / Master's] student in the [Department] at [University] for the [Fall Year] intake.

I recently read your paper "[Paper Title]" ([Journal or Conference, Year]) and was particularly interested in [specific method or finding, and why it interests you]. This aligns closely with my experience in [your related area].

During my [undergraduate thesis / role at Organization], I [what you did: methods, tools and the result, with numbers if possible]. I have [number] publication(s), including "[Publication Title]" in [Journal]. I am also skilled in [2–3 relevant skills or tools].

I would be grateful to know whether you anticipate accepting new [PhD / Master's] students for [Fall Year], and whether funding opportunities such as research or teaching assistantships may be available in your group. I have attached my CV [and transcript] for your review.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,
[Full Name]
[Current Position], [Institution]
[Phone] | [Email] | [LinkedIn or Google Scholar link]

TEMPLATE 2: SHORT VERSION

Use this when the professor's page asks for brief emails, or for a second contact in the same department.

Subject: Inquiry about [PhD / Master's] Opportunities in Your Lab – Fall [Year]

Dear Professor [Last Name],

I am [Full Name], a [degree] graduate from [University] with research experience in [area]. Your work on [specific topic], especially "[Paper Title]", closely matches my interest in [your interest].

Are you planning to take new [PhD / Master's] students for [Fall Year]? I have attached my CV, which includes my [thesis / publications / experience] in [area].

Thank you for your time.

Best regards,
[Full Name]
[Email] | [LinkedIn]

TEMPLATE 3: FOLLOW-UP (AFTER 7–10 DAYS, NO REPLY)

Reply in the same email thread so the professor can see your first message. Follow up only once.

Subject: Re: [Original Subject Line]

Dear Professor [Last Name],

I hope you are doing well. I am following up on my email of [date] about joining your research group as a [PhD / Master's] student for [Fall Year]. I understand you have a busy schedule, and I remain very interested in your work on [topic].

I have attached my CV again for your convenience. I would be grateful for any guidance on whether a position may be available.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,
[Full Name]

TEMPLATE 4: WHEN THE PROFESSOR REPLIES POSITIVELY

Subject: Re: [Original Subject Line]

Dear Professor [Last Name],

Thank you very much for your kind response and for considering me. I would be happy to [schedule a meeting / submit my application / share more information about my research].

I am available [days and times, with your time zone, e.g. Monday–Friday, 9 am–5 pm WAT] and can meet via [Zoom / Teams / Google Meet] at a time convenient for you. [I will also submit my application to the programme by the deadline of date.]

Thank you again. I look forward to speaking with you.

Kind regards,
[Full Name]

DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do** spell the professor's name and title correctly (Professor or Dr. [Last Name], never "Dear Sir").
- **Do** mention one specific paper or project of theirs, and connect it to your own experience.
- **Do** proofread, and send a test email to yourself first to check formatting and attachments.
- **Don't** paste your whole CV or life story into the email. Keep it to 4–5 short paragraphs.
- **Don't** email several professors in the same message or CC them together.
- **Don't** ask "Do you have funding?" as your first sentence. Show your fit first, then ask.
- **Don't** send more than one follow-up. If there's no reply, move on: it is not personal.

Tip: track every professor you contact (name, university, date sent, follow-up date, reply) in a spreadsheet.