

## Frequently Asked Questions

### UBEL DTP Studentship Competition for ESRC funding

# What is on offer?

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UBEL DTP studentships cover tuition fees at the **UKRI rate** and an annual maintenance stipend. For 2023/24 an UBEL studentship will cover tuition fees of £4,712 and a stipend of £20,622. Please note this figure is likely to increase annually. The stipend figure includes the London Weighting Allowance.

## What else does an UBEL award cover?

Students in receipt of ESRC funding can apply for other funding streams such as the **Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)** and if relevant, contributions towards fieldwork funding, difficult language training and international institutional visits.

UBEL also supports placements or internships.

## What structure of the studentships are available?

ESRC studentships at the UBEL DTP are structured around the following routes: 1+3, +3, 2+3 and +4 funding. Please note that not all routes are available in all institutions or pathways; this information will be made available on dedicated pathway pages (when available). For more information on the route structure, see webpage: <https://ubel-dtp.ac.uk/awardstructure/>

The ESRC is introducing a new PhD model from 2024/25. Instead of the traditional three years of funding for a full-time PhD they are adding an extra three months of time (and stipend) to allow extra time for training throughout the PhD. In addition, they will be introducing a placement scheme where students who participate in a placement will receive an extra three months of time (and stipend). This extra funded time would be **in addition** to the time periods indicated below and apply to all routes (i.e. 1+3, +3, 2+3 and +4, 3.5 and 3.25).

These changes are subject to confirmation of ESRC funding for the UBEL ESRC DTP.

## Can I study part time?

Yes, UBEL welcome's part time studentships. Part-time ESRC students undertake their studentships at 50% of the full-time rate (although PT students in some faculties may study at a 60% rate). Therefore a +3 routes at a 50% rate would be six years long for part-time students. The stipend and tuition fee rate would also be at 50%.

## Are remote studentships available?

UBEL cannot support distance learning and remote studentships are not available. If successful, students must live in the UK and be based within easy travelling distance of their university.

## Does my research need to be based in the UK?

No – UBEL welcomes global research.

## What if I apply for the wrong training route or pathway?

Your application will not be disadvantaged if you select the 'wrong' route or pathway: the DTP will recommend an appropriate route or pathway based on previous training if that is the most appropriate one for your studies.

Occasionally, candidates may be awarded a slightly different configuration (for example 3.5 years depending on previous training, or two years if the candidate has already started doctoral study) or suggested a different pathway.

All applications are considered equally by the pathways, Group Panels and DTP Board.

## Are there quotas for certain disciplines?

There are no quotas at the UBEL DTP for applications to any route or pathway.

## Are there studentships for pre-defined research studies?

UBEL's main studentship competition supports students' individual research and the applications for funding should be student-led. For the main studentship competition there are no pre-defined research studies; research proposals should however be within the social science remit.

## How many studentship awards are available?

The number of awards for 2024 entry is yet to be determined; Please see table below for an outline of the number of awards received and made over the past 4 years:

	<b>Preliminary applications</b>	<b>Invitation to full application</b>	<b>Awards</b>
<b>2020</b>	307	150	36
<b>2021</b>	480	231	38
<b>2022</b>	421	167	39
<b>2023</b>	378	162	33

## Can I make more than one funding application?

No – please focus on one area of study and submit one application.

## When will the studentship start?

Studentships start on 1<sup>st</sup> October. If you need to start your studentship after this date, please consult your supervisor and ensure this information is noted on the application form. UBEL cannot guarantee that a deferred start date will be possible, and any deferrals will need to be considered by colleagues at ESRC, after an award is made.

# Doctoral Application

## When should I apply for my doctoral programme?

As well as applying for an ESRC studentship, you will also need to **apply for the relevant doctoral programme of study** at your chosen DTP institution. The application can be completed simultaneously or after you have received confirmation of your funding.

## I am applying for a 1+3 studentship, when should I apply for my doctoral programme?

For 1+3 and 2+3 applications, you will need to make separate applications for both your Masters and doctoral programmes, in accordance with the institution's requirements. The applications can be completed simultaneously or if successful, you can complete your doctoral application during your masters-level year.

Please ensure you clearly outline both programmes you will be applying to in your funding application.

For a very small number of 1+3 candidates, you might undertake your Master's programme at one of the DTP institutions and your MPhil/PhD at another – this is due to shared pathway arrangements across institutions in these cases. Administrative colleagues will be able to advise if this is the case when you make your Master's application.

## Do I need to wait for the outcome of the doctoral application?

You do not need to wait for the outcome of your doctoral application before making your studentship application. Please do not delay contacting your proposed supervisor and making your preliminary studentship application while you wait to hear the outcome of your doctoral application.

It is essential that you discuss your intention to apply for ESRC funding with your proposed academic department and supervisors at your DTP institution. You should discuss your proposed research project, any research training you have already received and any specific further training that your chosen department or institution will provide.

## I am a current doctoral student, can I apply for ESRC funding?

If you are a current MPhil/PhD student at one of the UBEL DTP institutions, you may apply for an ESRC studentship provided that you have not already completed a substantial proportion of a PhD; for example, funds should not be used to support a student entering year three of a three-year programme.

If your application is successful, the length of your award will be reduced by the time already spent undertaking your doctoral study.

# Alternative Funding

## Can I apply if I am receipt of alternative funding?

If a student already holds an award from, or is otherwise financially supported by, another organisation and the ESRC considers that award, or other form of support, to be sufficient to cover maintenance and/or tuition fees, the student will not be eligible for an award from the ESRC.

New studentships cannot be used to extend existing studentships.

## Can I apply for joint funding with another research council?

No – this is not possible. An UBEL award is for ESRC funding only. However, interdisciplinarity is encouraged and candidates should outline in their application where their research straddles other research council remits.

## Can I work if I receive an UBEL studentship award?

ESRC studentship award holders are encouraged to undertake a certain amount of paid teaching or other research work during their studentship provided that they spend a minimum of 1,800 hours each academic year on their doctoral research and research training. Further to this, demonstrating, teaching, or other types of employment should not be a compulsory element of research training.

Any additional employment outside of this cannot be supported and students should not be overcommitted during the period of their award.

# Academic eligibility requirements

## What academic qualifications do I need to apply for funding?

If you wish to apply for a **1+3**, **2+3**, or **+4** award you should normally have (or expect to achieve by 30 September 2024) an upper second or first class honours degree or a Master's degree from a recognised UK university, or the equivalent qualification if gained outside the UK.

If you wish to apply for a **+3**, **3.5** or **3.25** award you must normally have (or expect to achieve by 30 September 2024) a Masters degree with an appropriate level of research training.

## What level of prior training is expected for a +3 studentship?

If you wish to apply for a **+3** award you must normally have (or expect to achieve by 30 September 2024) a Master's degree with an appropriate level of research training. Please ensure you fully complete the +3 section of the Preliminary Application with your supervisor and consult the [Postgraduate Training Guidelines \(2022\)](#) for guidance about the level of previous research training required; pages 7-11 inclusive provide full information.

Annually, ESRC audits +3 studentship awards to ensure that UBEL DTP is meeting the requirements for +3 entry based on research methods training in the social sciences.

# International Students

## Are UBEL studentships open to international students?

All UKRI studentships are open to both home and international students.

To be classed as a home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

If a candidate does not meet the criteria above, they would be classified as an International student.

## What are the eligibility requirements for international students?

Students classified as international students are eligible to apply for a full award - both the stipend to support living costs, and tuition fees at the UKRI rate. The studentships are open to international students in all disciplines.

**The DTP is allowed to make no more than 30% of the total number of studentships (across competitions) to international students – this is an ESRC condition and cannot be waived.**

## Will the studentship cover the full tuition fee for international students?

For international fee paying candidates, please note that the ESRC studentship only covers home fees at the UKRI rate and not the full international tuition fee set by universities.

The fee difference will be covered either by the department/university or an alternative source, (e.g. an overseas scholarship, overseas government funding or supervisor's project grant which must be stated.) and cannot be funded from the stipend or family/personal funds. UKRI guidance specifies that UKRI funding cannot be used to cover the fees difference.

UCL will offer an "International Scholars Award for Doctoral Training" (ISAD) to cover the fee difference for successful overseas candidates for 2024 entry.

Birkbeck, University of East London and University of Greenwich will offer fee waivers for successful overseas candidates for 2024 entry.

LSHTM candidates may be eligible for a fee bursaries to UBEL awardees who are nationals of low income and lower middle income countries (LLMICs), as set out by the World Bank [here](#). Please email the scholarships team at LSHTM to confirm your eligibility.

**If you are unsure, please discuss with your supervisor and ask them to confirm how the fees difference will be covered.**

## Does UBEL cover visa costs for international applicants?

UBEL cannot cover visa costs for international students.

## What proportion of applications are from international students?

For 2023 entry, 61% of the total number of preliminary applications were from international students. (Refer to question above for total number of applications and awards per annum)

**Please note that the DTP is allowed to make no more than 30% of the total number of awards per year (across competitions) to international students – this is an ESRC condition and cannot be waived.**

## Do international students require an IELTS score to make an application?

UBEL do not require an IELTS or language test score to make an application. However, this may be important for your application to study at your chosen institution.

# Supervisor Queries

## Do I need a supervisor to apply?

Yes. It is essential to have a principal supervisor when making a funding application. We encourage prospective students to contact a potential principal supervisor as soon as possible.

## Can I have supervisors from two separate institutions? Or from an institution outside of the DTP?

Applicants can have supervisors from two separate institutions. Your principal supervisor must be based in the department/pathway/institution where you will study and therefore must be from a DTP institution.

Your subsidiary supervisor can be from a different institution, if this is suitable for your research.

## Does my supervisor need extensive doctoral supervision experience?

It is important that the supervisory team is the right fit for your research. Candidates can ask less experienced supervisors to be part of their supervisory team, however the supervisory team should also include a supervisor that also has substantial doctoral supervision experience too.

Supervisors must also meet institutional supervisory conditions.

## Can I change my supervisor at a later date?

Yes, this is possible. Candidates will be able to update their supervisory team in the second half of the application process, when submitting a full proposal.

## Do I need to include pathway leader in my email correspondence for a potential supervisor?

No – this is not necessary.

# Contents of Preliminary Application

## What is required at the preliminary stage of the application?

The Preliminary application asks for details of your qualifications, residential information, programme of study and supervisor, along with initial details of your proposed research.

## Are references required?

No references are required at the preliminary stage. If successful at the preliminary stage, applicants will be required to provide two references.

## When will I submit a full research proposal?

Please note you are not expected to submit a full research proposal at the preliminary application stage. Applicants invited to make a full application will then submit a full research proposal.

Applicants are required to submit a 300-word summary at the preliminary stage, describing its relevancy to ESRC remit.

## What is AQM?

AQM = Advanced Quantitative Methods. The AQM enhancement is an additional stipend of £2,000 (per annum) intended to encourage students to undertake training in advanced quantitative methods and to apply this in their PhD research and beyond. This is expected to be at a level over and above

the basic generic and subject-specific methods requirements and does not **include qualitative methods**. The enhanced AQM stipend is only available during the doctoral (+3) programme.

Applicants can indicate in their preliminary application that they will be submitting an AQM application with their full proposal, following a successful application at the preliminary stage.

### Should my research be interdisciplinary?

While it is not a mandatory requirement for your research to be interdisciplinary, it is encouraged. If your research covers areas outside of the social sciences, such as humanities, biological sciences, engineering and physical sciences, medicine, natural environment or science and technology, the application form will ask you to demonstrate this. It is also important to note if your proposed work straddles other research council remits.

### Do I have to use ESRC datasets in my research?

No – it is not essential to use ESRC datasets in your research. ESRC has a prescribed list of datasets available for use and applicants are asked to note which of these, if any, will be used in their research. Candidates can consider other reliable datasets also.

Any datasets used must be relevant to your research project.

List of ESRC datasets is available here: <https://ubel-dtp.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/List-of-ESRC-datasets.pdf>

### Does my application need to include my professional experience?

Yes – you will be asked to outline your most relevant/recent professional experience in your preliminary application.

### Do I need to demonstrate any potential external collaboration?

It is helpful to consider and demonstrate any potential external collaboration in your preliminary application. The DTP encourages placements or internships. Please note that while applicants are required to answer a question on external collaboration in the application form, the DTP understand that applicants may have not planned for joint activity at this early stage.

## Equal Opportunities

### Is it mandatory to comply with equal opportunities monitoring?

You will be asked to complete a mandatory Equal Opportunities monitoring form before you can submit your preliminary application. This is an ESRC requirement.

Staff involved with the assessment of your application will **not** have access or be permitted to view this form.

Applicants can choose non-disclosure options for all of the questions within this form.

## How does UBEL consider equal opportunities? What else should I consider outside the content of my application?

UBEL are keen to widen access to funding and recognise that candidates may wish to supply additional information about their academic or personal backgrounds which can be considered during the selection process. We are committed to addressing inequalities in participation in our doctoral training programme and there will be a section at the preliminary application stage where candidates can explain any special circumstances and/or the difficulties you may have overcome in achieving your education. This will be approx. 350 words and should be separate from the topic/content of your proposal. A sub-panel of UBEL DTP staff will review this section independently and will make recommendations to academic panels.

## Are applications encouraged from certain groups?

UBEL DTP encourages applications from all under-represented groups, including people with disabilities, ethnic minorities (especially Black British), lower income families, mature students and from those that have been in care at any point during their childhood.

# Assessment of Applications

## How are applications assessed?

Applications are assessed using 3 main criteria: Track Record, Research Project, Training Environment.

Application criteria from last year's cycle is available via the following link. Please note this may be subject to change for the 2024 cycle: <https://ubel-dtp.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Scoring-Criteria.pdf>

Interdisciplinarity is encouraged but not a mandatory element of an UBEL funding application.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is integral to UBEL. As such, prospective students must complete an equal opportunities form and a separate form to capture extra information that you may want to share, outside of academic content. These parts of the application are reviewed by separate sub-panel and recommendations are made to academic review teams.

## Who will review my application?

Preliminary applications are reviewed by disciplinary pathway teams. Equal opportunities elements of the application are reviewed independent by an UBEL sub-panel. At the full application stage, research proposals are assessed by interdisciplinary academics from across UBEL institutions, before being sent on for approval by the DTP Board.

# Making your application

## How do I make an application?

Prospective students can apply via the Survey Monkey Apply portal. UBEL will not accept emailed applications.



A link to apply will be available on the UBEL webpage when the scheme is launched.

## When do I need to submit my application?

Timelines will be published on the website in due course.

## I have specific questions related to the institution I am applying for – who should I speak to?

### **Birkbeck, University of London**

Ben Raphael, Registry Officer - [graduateresearchschool@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:graduateresearchschool@bbk.ac.uk)

### **London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine**

LSHTM Scholarships Team - [scholarships@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:scholarships@lshtm.ac.uk)

### **SOAS, University of London**

SOAS studentships - [scholarships@soas.ac.uk](mailto:scholarships@soas.ac.uk)

### **University College London**

UBEL DTP Team- [ubel-dtp@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ubel-dtp@ucl.ac.uk)

### **University of East London**

Richard Bottoms, Postgraduate Research Student Manager - [r.bottoms@uel.ac.uk](mailto:r.bottoms@uel.ac.uk)

### **University of Greenwich**

Julie Webber, Executive Assistant - [J.L.Webber@greenwich.ac.uk](mailto:J.L.Webber@greenwich.ac.uk)