

UCL, Bloomsbury and East London DTP

Co-funded Studentships Competition – 2026 Entry Guidance for Academic Colleagues and Pathway Leaders

Overview of the two Co-funded application stages

1. The UCL, Bloomsbury and East London DTP Co-funded Studentships Competition is a two-stage process.

- **Stage One – for academic colleagues in the UBEL DTP**

One or more academics from an identified **UBEL DTP Pathway** work with a non-academic partner to put together a proposal for a Co-funded studentship project. This project should address a research topic which is of both theoretical and practical significance and provide opportunities for a funded PhD student to gain first-hand experience of work outside an academic environment. The student is expected to be supported throughout the project by both an academic and a non-academic supervisor.

Academic applications must be made on UBEL's SurveyMonkey Apply platform <https://ucl.smapply.io/> where you may create an account if you don't already have one.

This stage opens at **12:00 noon on Monday 15 September 2025** and closes on **Monday 17 November 2025 at 23:59 (GMT)**

All submitted proposals are considered by the Co-funded Studentships Panel in the UBEL DTP. Academic colleagues will be informed of the outcome of this stage **w/c Monday 15 December 2025**

Further information about completing the Co-funded application form and the selection criteria is on **page 5** of this document.

- **Stage Two – for students applying for the Co-funded studentships**

Successful academic colleagues from the first stage (above) advertise via the UBEL DTP website and their own institutional websites/academic networks to recruit a suitable student for their Co-funded award. This should be done in consultation with the relevant UBEL Pathway Leader, who is responsible for assessing the academic strength of candidates.

Student applications must be made on UBEL's SurveyMonkey Apply platform <https://ucl.smapply.io/> where you may create an account if you don't already have one.

This stage opens at **12:00 noon on Monday 12 January 2026** and closes on **Monday 9 March 2026 at 23:59 (GMT)**

Important information about making your application

2. Co-funded studentships are drawn from the total number of studentships awarded to the UBEL DTP by the ESRC, the majority of which will be awarded in the Main studentships each year. Therefore, the Co-funded Studentships Panel can only award a limited number of Co-funded studentships. In recent years, the panel has awarded between five and eight Co-funded studentships. The precise figure each year is also determined by the strength of the academic proposals which are submitted.
3. Project proposals can be in any area of work relating to the DTP Pathways and there is no set limit on the number of projects that can be submitted under a given Pathway. Please also note:
 - (i) Proposals for interdisciplinary projects which involve more than one Pathway are actively encouraged;
 - (ii) This scheme encourages supervisory collaborations between senior researchers and early career researchers (ECRs) and colleagues are asked to indicate if this is the case on their proposals.
4. Pathway Leaders will be asked to comment on the relative strength of submissions in their area in order to assist the Co-funded Studentships Panel's judgement of the merit of each.

Providing financial information with your application

5. Colleagues will need to indicate financial contribution levels in the application form and the initial contract to enable Research Services teams at the host institution to liaise about a research contract with the non-academic partner.

Advertising and recruiting students for the Co-funded Studentships

6. Successful academic projects will be advertised on the UBEL DTP website between January and March 2026. Successful supervisors should also make arrangements to advertise via their own institution or departmental websites as appropriate. There is a draft advert template available on the DTP website, which you should complete and submit with your application. This text will be used to advertise on the UBEL DTP website.
7. Students for UBEL DTP co-funded awards must be recruited in open competition and proposals should not be written with preferred candidates in mind. Award offers may be rescinded if this condition is not adhered to.
8. All student applicants must submit their Co-funded application through UBEL's SurveyMonkey Apply platform. This ensures all candidates are undertaking the same

application process and fulfils UBEL DTP's reporting requirements to ESRC as well our commitment to monitoring our Widening Participation strategy.

Supervisors must not accept student applications sent outside of this process and UBEL DTP will not accept responsibility for student applications that are not made on our SurveyMonkey Apply platform.

Students who will be using Advanced Quantitative Methods (AQM) in their research must also submit the AQM form with their application.

Process after students have submitted their Co-funding application

9. After the closing date, Professional Services colleagues in the UBEL DTP will make student applications available to the supervisor for review. Supervisors will then consider the applications and interview shortlisted candidates where appropriate. Where possible, supervisors should also select appropriately qualified reserve candidate(s) for the studentship who may be able to take up an offer of an award if the preferred candidate declines the offer. **Please see the additional notes below about international candidates.**

The supervisor is responsible for making the initial offer to the preferred candidate and ensuring that any acceptance from them is confirmed in writing. Supervisors must be clear in their initial offer that the award is subject to confirmation by the DTP Board in April 2026 – this is particularly important in the case of international candidates, to ensure the UBEL DTP stays within the 30% cap required by ESRC. Reserve candidates may also be informed that they are reserves at this stage.

10. Details of the nominated student and reserve candidate(s) should be submitted to the UBEL DTP Professional Services team at ubel-dtp@ucl.ac.uk by **31 March 2026**.
11. As with nominations for the Main Studentships, the nomination of Co-funded Studentship holders will be subject to confirmation by the DTP Board at its Studentships Awards Board in April 2026. The DTP Board will check that the proposed length and route of the award are appropriate, taking into account the nominated candidate's previous research training. In some cases, the Board may recommend that additional training is undertaken.

If a nominated candidate will be using Advanced Quantitative Methods (AQM), the AQM Sub-Panel will check that the level and methods used are appropriate to the candidate's discipline and/or pathway.

Where colleagues are successful in gaining a Co-funded award but fail to recruit a suitable student by the **9 March 2026** deadline, the DTP Board reserves the right to withdraw the award.

International student applicants for Co-funded Studentships

12. Where home students are nominated for UBEL Co-funded awards by academic departments, approval of the nomination will be considered by the DTP Board at its Awards Board in April 2026.

Students classified as international for tuition fee purposes are eligible to apply for a full award - both the stipend to support living costs, and 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 the Main and Co-funded competitions) to international students – this is an ESRC condition which cannot be waived.

Please carefully note the below:

For the Main competition, there is a mandatory 30% cap (except for Economics) for international candidates at the full application stage. For the Co-funded competition, a similar cap will apply so a case will need to be made for any proposed awards to international applicants, which will be reviewed by the DTP Board. Supervisors must be aware that they may not be able to have an international candidate (for equity with main competition) so if they are nominating an international candidate, they should have a home candidate in reserve.

Guidance notes for completion of the Co-funded Studentships application form

Guidance for Academic Colleagues and Pathway Leaders

Please note that all questions are mandatory and should be answered as fully as possible (unless specified otherwise).

Academic Partners

13. The applicant should be the academic who will be the first supervisor on the proposed project. Please provide details of any additional academic supervisor(s).
14. As that this scheme encourages collaborations between senior researchers and early career researchers (ECRs), please note if this is the case in your proposal.
15. Please detail the Institution (UCL, Birkbeck, LSHTM, SOAS, UEL or University of Greenwich) and department of the applicant.
16. Please detail which of the DTP Group Panels the project comes under, and which pathway(s) within these are being used to define research training requirements. **The relevant Pathway Leader(s) should be informed about the application as early as possible.**
17. If known, please indicate whether the proposed project will be full-time or part-time and 1+3.5, +3.5 or 4-year in structure.

UCL, Bloomsbury and East London DTP studentships can be held on a full-time or a part-time basis, and within a 1+3.5, 4-year (Integrated PhD) or +3.5 programme:

- In a 1+3.5 studentship, the first year of study is taken up with a Masters research training programme focused on generic and discipline-specific skills, and production of a dissertation.
- A 4-year studentship also involves Masters level research training, but this is taken alongside the doctoral research in the first part of the programme and there is no separate dissertation component.
- A +3.5 studentship means the student can commence on the research project immediately and focus on it throughout, as well as undertaking the training element required by ESRC. For this reason, it is the more usual form taken by Co-funded awards.

However, it is important to bear in mind that the development of rounded researchers is a crucial underpinning goal of ESRC studentship funding, and +3.5 award holders will therefore be expected to demonstrate that they have already undertaken much of the prior research training required in their area of work. This inevitably restricts the range

of potentially suitable candidates, and there may also be specific benefits to students undertaking their research training with a steer imparted by the co-funded project.

Given these points, it is strongly recommended that applicants and their non-academic partners give careful consideration to the expected outcomes from the research, the timing of the availability of data and research results under the different forms of programme, and the advantages and disadvantages that may be conferred by these.

Please also note that for students starting in the DTP from October 2024, the funding end date and submission dates are the same: there is no 'writing up' year as in the previous DTP, which last recruited in 2023.

18. If known, please indicate whether a request for AQM status is likely.

DTP Co-funded studentships are also eligible for Advanced Quantitative Methods (AQM) status, which entitles the holder to an enhanced stipend during the doctoral research element of their programme (an additional £2,000 per annum). AQM funding entails a commitment by the student to undertaking quantitative methods training at a level which is clearly above that which is usual in their area of work. For this reason, AQM requests must be made after the studentship holder has actually been recruited. This ensures that students are consulted before making the necessary commitment and have the skills to support it. If a request for AQM status seems likely, however, applicants are asked to flag this at the proposal stage in order to facilitate the DTP's budgetary planning.

Project Partners

Eligible collaborating partners

19. Please provide details of the name of the collaborating organisation and the principal contact within it. Co-funding or collaborating partners can be private sector companies, public sector bodies or voluntary/ third sector organisations. Because of the requirement for partner involvement in supervision, only non-academic organisations with an operating base in the UK are eligible to support a UCL, Bloomsbury and East London DTP studentship. Beyond this, there are no restrictions, and applicants are encouraged to think inventively about types of collaboration that may be productive.
20. In identifying an appropriate collaborating partner and reaching an agreement on the arrangements for the research project, applicants should consider the following points in particular:
- The nature of the research project, why a co-funded studentship is appropriate, and what form the studentship programme should take (see next section for more detail)
 - How the work is to be conducted, how the academic and non-academic elements relate to each other, and how the academic standards of the work will be ensured
 - The arrangements for joint supervision with the partner, and, where appropriate, between academic supervisors

- The arrangements for seeking ethical approval, for agreeing on intellectual property arising from the research, and recognising the student's contribution
- The means of identifying an appropriate student

Further information about project partners

21. As part of the application process, non-academic partners are asked to provide a brief description of the main activities of their organisation. This information will be used by the DTP Board to place the proposed project in the context of work of the collaborating partner. It is particularly important to have this information about smaller organisations which do not have a high profile and whose activities may not be widely known outside the sector in which they operate.
22. Please give details of any previous experience of collaboration between the partners making this application, and between the partners and any other organisations. Details of any previous involvement in social science research by the non-academic organisation should also be provided.
23. Explain how the collaborating partner will be involved in the management and supervision of the research project. Please include a description of arrangements for the confirmation of supervision and management of the project in the event of changes in key personnel during the project. The extent of their involvement should be discussed and agreed with the collaborating partner in the first instance, and then confirmed with the chosen student when the nomination process has been completed. The non-academic partner will be expected to provide an induction programme for the student similar to that provided for new employees and, during the tenure of the award, the student will also be requested to spend time on the organisation's premises. For a full-time award, the expected minimum is three months per year, but not necessarily as a continuous period. During this time, the student must be engaged in activities which comprise an integral component of the research to be presented in the thesis.
24. The information provided here should include: brief details of any special materials and facilities which will be made available to the student by the non-academic partner; a description of the work to be undertaken at their premises; a proposed time-table showing the duration and frequency of visits; and an indication of the part of the organisation to which the studentship will be attached.
25. There should be real and measurable benefits to the non-academic partner from the outcomes of the project. Expectations of how these will benefit the organisation should be made clear.

Supervisors

26. The expertise of the academic supervisors relevant to the project must be shown. It is important that the proposed project is clearly within the research strengths and expertise of the proposed supervisory team. Please also provide an outline of how the proposed research links into the main supervisor's research community, to show how

the studentship holder will be integrated into related activity that will support their development.

27. Co-funded students can place higher demands on the time of supervisors than standard research studentships. Applicants should provide details of the current supervisory workload for each proposed supervisor and explain the arrangements that will be put in place to ensure that an appropriate level of supervision is available to the proposed co-funded studentship. Please also provide information about the number of completions for each supervisor.
28. Please explain how supervision duties will be shared between the academic supervisors.

Project proposal

29. Please detail the title of the proposed project.
30. Please upload a document detailing the goals, approach, timeline and likely outcomes of the proposed research project. This outline should be clear and concise (**maximum two pages**), and include:
 - The rationale for the project and the research questions being asked
 - An account of the methodologies and techniques that might be employed
 - The timetable for conducting the research
 - The anticipated outcomes from the project, in terms of its contribution to knowledge and understanding, new methodologies and techniques, data etc
 - Plans for the dissemination of outcomes and, where relevant, achieving non-academic impact
31. This information will allow the DTP Board to assess the significance of the research, and also to see whether the proposed work is practicable within the period of a studentship (bearing in mind there is now no 'writing up' year). It is important to make clear the social science content of the proposal, to enable the Board to determine that the field of study falls within the remit of the DTP.
32. Note that the outcomes should have wider relevance than the needs of the non-academic partner, and therefore the envisaged intellectual as well as commercial benefits should be emphasised. The UKRI 2020 Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training says "The collaborating organisation and academic partner should undertake to develop a research project of the same challenge as that of a doctoral programme undertaken solely in an academic institution."
33. The project should therefore contribute to the creation, development and application of new techniques or ways of working or relate to the broader environment in a way that improves the effectiveness and efficiency of individuals and organisations. It should also contribute to the ESRC's mission to provide trained social scientists that meet the needs of users and beneficiaries, thereby contributing to the economic competitiveness of the United Kingdom, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and the quality of life.

34. Finally, it must fulfil the aim of a co-funded studentship to provide a real opportunity for a student to gain first-hand experience of work in a non-academic environment, and to contribute meaningfully to that environment as part of a genuine process of knowledge exchange. The completed research should be published as widely as possible, to both academic and non-academic audiences.

Ethical considerations

35. The ethical issues that are likely to arise in the design and conduct of the proposed research must be fully addressed. You should demonstrate that consideration has been given to:
- honesty to researchers and participants about the purpose of the work;
 - the methods and possible uses of the research, and the risks involved;
 - confidentiality of information supplied by research participants, anonymity of respondents, and independence and impartiality of researchers.

You should specify the professional code of ethics governing research which will be used as the guiding framework.

There is a word limit of 250 words for this question.

Proposed Training and Support

36. Please provide an outline of the likely training arrangements that will be made available to the student. The academic and non-academic supervisors will be expected to agree the arrangements for the delivery of formal research training, regular formal progress meetings and briefing meetings with the student, throughout the period of research. The DTP Board will therefore be looking for evidence of a structure that will also be responsive to the needs of the individual student.

Intellectual Property Rights

37. Please provide a description of how property rights issues will be addressed. An official agreement between the academic and non-academic partner concerning the distribution of proceeds from commercially valuable research is considered an essential element of any Co-funded studentship. It is expected that an agreement covering IPR will need to be completed, and a copy sent to the UCL, Bloomsbury and East London DTP prior to the recruited student's commencement of studies. It is important to note that the responsibility for safeguarding the student's rights is deemed to rest with the HEI. Failure to address this issue will severely weaken an application. At the very least, consideration of IPR issues should be shown in the proposal, making it evident that the student will be protected by the IPR agreement.

Note that the student retains all student-generated IPR and the ability to publish all findings.

Please ensure a letter of support from the proposed project partners is included with your application. This is a mandatory for submission.

Financial contributions

38. UBEL now requires matched funding for the co-funded scheme, calculated as 50% of the total fees and subsistence (before any 'AQM' supplement), calculated using the most recent rates publicised on the UBEL website.

Please note that it is essential to provide as much information about the intended contribution as possible and in particular to complete the "initial contract" form as part of the application.

39. For Co-funded awards, it is expected that the company will meet the travel, subsistence and accommodation costs incurred by the student associated with visits to the non-academic organisation.
40. In kind contributions will not count towards co-funding arrangements. All co-funding must have a direct cash value. Contributions other than to fees and maintenance might include UK or international travel and subsistence, specialist training resources or access to data and resources. In such instances the target 50% co-funding will be calculated as half of home fees and subsistence (before AQM supplement – see below). Office space or consultancy services (including supervision costs) will not be accepted as a form of in-kind contribution.

Application timelines

This staff application stage opens at **12:00 noon on Monday 15 September 2025** and closes on **Monday 17 November 2025 at 23:59 (GMT)**

All submitted proposals are considered by the Co-funded Studentships Panel in the UBEL DTP. Academic colleagues will be informed of the outcome of this stage **w/c Monday 15 December 2025**

The student application stage opens at **12:00 noon on Monday 12 January 2026** and closes on **Monday 9 March 2026 at 23:59 (GMT)**

Names of nominated students to be given to the DTP by **31 March 2026**.

DTP Board to consider Co-funded nominations alongside those of the Main competition at its Awards Board in **April 2026**.

