

ESRC Research Studentships at the UCL, Bloomsbury and East London Doctoral Training Partnership (UBEL DTP)

Application Guide for 2026 Entry – Preliminary Application

Deadlines for 2026 Entry

Preliminary application

Due via Survey Monkey Apply by **Monday 10 November 2025 23.59 (GMT)**

If you are successful at the Preliminary stage, you will be invited to make a full application:

Full application

Due via Survey Monkey Apply by **Monday 02 February 2026 23.59 (GMT)**

These deadlines apply to ESRC studentship applications in any of the UBEL DTP pathways at any of the six DTP institutions, which are:

Birkbeck, University of London
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
SOAS, University of London
University College London
University of East London
University of Greenwich

Contents

What is on offer?	Page 3
Types of ESRC funding available at the UBEL DTP	Page 3
Availability of Awards	Page 4
Applying for doctoral study at a DTP Institution	Page 4
Institutional Contacts (Administrative staff)	Page 5
Institutional Contacts (Academic staff)	Page 5
Who can apply for ESRC funding?	Page 5
Current doctoral students at UBEL DTP institutions	Page 6
Eligibility Criteria	Page 6
International Student Eligibility	Page 6
Preliminary application for ESRC funding	Page 7
Using Survey Monkey Apply	Page 7
Section One: Personal Information	Page 8
Section Two: Programme of Study and UBEL Pathway(s)	Page 8
Section Three - Start Date and Mode of Attendance	Page 8
Section Four: Qualifications	Page 8
Section Five: Employment	Page 9
Section Six: Research Experience and Proposed Research	Page 9
Section Seven – Placement	Page 9
Section Eight – Confidential Personal Information Monitoring Form	Page 10
Section Nine - Widening Participation Additional Information	Page 10
Section Ten – Declaration	Page 10
Extra information to consider	Page 10
Submitting your application	Page 11
Selection process at the preliminary stage	Page 11
List of ESRC datasets	Page 12

What is on offer?

UBEL DTP studentships cover tuition fees at the **UKRI rate** and an annual maintenance stipend. For 2025/26 an UBEL studentship will cover tuition fees of £5,006 and a minimum stipend of £22,780 (for a full-time student). *Please note this figure is likely to increase year on year. The stipend figure includes the London Weighting Allowance.*

You will also be able to apply for other funding streams such as the **Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)** and a contribution towards fieldwork funding.

Types of ESRC funding available at the UBEL DTP

1+3.5, +3.5 and +4.5 funding

ESRC studentships at the UBEL DTP are structured around the following routes: 1+3.5, +3.5 and +4.5 funding. Please note that not all routes are available in all institutions or pathways – please check the UBEL website for further details.

The ESRC has introduced a new PhD model from 2024/25. The new standard model for an ESRC studentship is 3.5 years. Instead of the traditional three years of funding for a full-time PhD, ESRC studentships will include an extra three months of time (and stipend) to allow extra time for training throughout the PhD. In addition, it is expected that ESRC studentship holders should have the opportunity to complete a high-quality placement in academia, policy, business or civil society organisations as part of their training. 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 standard study period and will apply to all routes.

1+3.5 programme: a one-year Master's programme precedes the three-year MPhil/PhD which will deliver the majority of the core training requirements; an additional 6 months of funding for extra training and a placement.

+3.5 programme: funding for a three-year MPhil/PhD, which assumes that a student has already met the majority of the core training requirements; an additional 6 months of funding for extra training and a placement.

+4.5 programme: up to four years' funding for a PhD which assumes that core and advanced training requirements can be met during the course of the programme. The requirements are normally met by undertaking modules from a linked Master's programme. PLEASE NOTE: candidates on this study route must demonstrate that the integrated level of training is necessary. The fourth year of a studentship is **NOT** for a writing up period.

You may only apply for one route and it is important that you discuss which one is appropriate for you with your proposed supervisor.

The above time-frames are for full-time students; 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 +3.5 route at a 50% rate would be seven years long for part-time students.

Note that if you require more than 60 credits of modules to complete your training requirements, you should normally select the +4 route, if that is available for your pathway and institution.

Please also note the following points about the routes:

- Your application will not be disadvantaged if you select the ‘wrong’ route: the DTP Board (which considers full applications at the final stage) will recommend an appropriate route based on previous training if that is the most appropriate one for your studies;
- Occasionally, candidates may be awarded a slightly different configuration depending on previous training or less time (for example, two years if the candidate has already started doctoral study);
- Applications for all routes are considered equally by the pathways, Group Panels and DTP Board. There are no quotas at the UBEL DTP for applications to any particular route or pathway.

Availability of Awards

Please see table below for an outline of the number of awards received and made over the past 5 years:

	Preliminary applications	Invitation to full application	Awards
2021	480	231	38
2022	421	167	39
2023	378	162	33
2024	592	212	35
2025	595	228	33

The UBEL DTP competition is extremely competitive, and the level of funding received from ESRC is limited. UBEL strives to offer a spread of studentships across pathways and institutions and must also consider ESRC steers (i.e. a number of studentships per year must be offered to candidates that demonstrate interdisciplinarity, use ESRC datasets and use Advanced Quantitative Methods).

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.

Applying for doctoral study at a DTP Institution

Your application for doctoral study

Doctoral study at the UCL, Bloomsbury and East London DTP is arranged in **30 pathways** organised into six groupings across the six DTP institutions. Each pathway is led by one of the six institutions but many of them have shared arrangements with the other DTP partner institutions.

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, unless you are a current doctoral student (see page 6). While the DTP encourages you to apply for a place on your chosen programme at an early stage, you do not need to be in receipt of an offer from your chosen institution at the time of applying for ESRC funding.

In some cases, the application deadlines for these programmes may be earlier than for the DTP studentship deadlines, so you will need to check with the relevant pathway contact for your chosen programme (see <https://ubel-dtp.ac.uk/groups-pathways/>) or with the relevant member of administrative staff, whose details are listed under Institutional Contacts below.

For 1+3 applications, you will usually need to make an application for both your Masters and doctoral programmes, in accordance with the institution’s requirements. Please ensure you clearly outline both programmes you will be applying to in your studentship 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.

Institutional Contacts (Administrative staff)

Birkbeck, University of London

Ben Raphael, Registry Officer

graduateresearchschool@bbk.ac.uk

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

LSHTM Scholarships Team

scholarships@lshtm.ac.uk

SOAS, University of London

SOAS studentships

scholarships@soas.ac.uk

University College London

UBEL DTP Team

ubel-dtp@ucl.ac.uk

University of East London

Richard Bottoms, Postgraduate Research Student Manager

r.bottoms@uel.ac.uk

University of Greenwich

Julie Webber, Executive Assistant

J.L.Webber@greenwich.ac.uk

Institutional Contacts (Academic staff)

Details of the groupings and pathways, along with Pathway Leaders and their teams, can be found on our UBEL website at: <https://ubel-dtp.ac.uk/groups-pathways/>

Who can apply for ESRC funding?

We encourage ESRC applications from candidates with research interests in the areas of the academic pathways of the DTP. In addition, please note the specific eligibility requirements below.

Academic qualifications

If you wish to apply for a **1+3.5** or **+4.5** award you should normally have (or expect to achieve by 30 September 2026) 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 **+3.5** award you must normally have (or expect to achieve by 30 September 2026) a Masters degree with an appropriate level of research training. You will be able to provide a brief overview of your research experience in the Preliminary Application, and greater detail as part of the full application form.

Current doctoral students at UBEL DTP institutions

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.

Eligibility Criteria

Please read this section in conjunction with the [UKRI Eligibility guidance](#) (pages 7-9).

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.

International Student Eligibility

Students classified as international students 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 competitions) to international students – this is an ESRC condition and cannot be waived.**

Year	Total Studentships	International studentships per annum
2020	36	5
2021	38	13
2022	39	14
2023	33	13
2024	35	12
2025	33	11

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 fees 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.), but not 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 2026 entry.
- Birkbeck, University of East London and University of Greenwich will offer fee waivers for successful overseas candidates for 2026 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.
- **Please note: UBEL cannot cover visa costs for international students. For any visa or immigration advice, please speak to your institutions visa compliance team.**

Note: These eligibility criteria are based on the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 2007 and subsequent amendments. These regulations cover England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. www.legislation.gov.uk/2007?title=Education%20fees

Further information, including frequently asked questions, can be found in the UKRI Training Grant guide: www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/

Preliminary application for ESRC funding

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.

The Survey Monkey Apply portal will open on **Monday 15 September 2025** and you may complete the **Preliminary** application from then until the closing date of **Monday 10 November 2025 23.59 (GMT)**. The Preliminary application asks for details of your qualifications, residential information, programme of study and supervisor, along with initial details of your proposed research. **Please note that no references are required at this first stage.**

Using Survey Monkey Apply

On accessing the Survey Monkey Apply online system for the first time, you will be asked to register for an account. You will then be able to use the sign-in details associated with this account to access previously UCL, Bloomsbury and East London Doctoral Training Partnership ESRC Studentships: Application Guide for 2026 Entry Page | 7

saved versions of your application content prior to submission, or to make a full application if you are invited to do so.

Once you have created an account, you will be asked to select a “program” to apply for. Please select “2026 Entry: ESRC Main Studentships Competition”. This will take you to the links to complete your preliminary application.

Section One: Personal Information

Please ensure you provide full contact details in case we need to contact you about your application. The application system will also send you updates via email - so please use an email address that is checked regularly. Sometimes the messages may be directed to a junk folder, so ensure you check that folder too.

Section Two: Programme of Study and UBEL Pathway(s)

Here you will need to provide the relevant information about your supervisor, department, programme of study and study route.

It is essential that applicants approach their proposed supervisor before applying and have their explicit agreement/consent before indicating their name on the application form. More details about the supervisory team will be expected at the second phase of the competition.

When you select your principal pathway, the list on the right-hand side will only show the institutions where that pathway is available. Candidates will not be penalised for selecting the incorrect route or pathway. At the review stage, if UBEL believes that your application should be reviewed by an alternative pathway or another study route should be taken, you will be informed directly.

For 1+3.5 entry, please indicate which master’s level programme you will be applying for.

Section Three - Start Date and Mode of Attendance

In terms of the duration of a studentship, UBEL DTP awards start on 1st October of every calendar year.

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.

If you are a current doctoral student and are applying for funding for your current doctoral programme, you will need to deduct any time already spent on doctoral study from the duration of the studentship award. UBEL can only offer funding for the remainder of your doctoral programme.

Section Four: Qualifications

Please provide details about current and previously awarded qualifications at undergraduate, postgraduate and professional level, starting with the most recent. If you are awarded a studentship, you will be required to provide evidence of your qualifications when you enrol at your DTP institution.

If you are currently undertaking your degree, please ensure you enter the date when your result will be known. If you are successful in your application, your studentship offer will be conditional until your degree

result is confirmed. If your current programme is at postgraduate level, please include modules taken and results (where known).

Please list any academic prizes or awards you have received. This is an optional question.

Section Five: Employment

Please also provide details about your employment for the last three years. If you have more employment history than space is available on form, please provide details of the most relevant employment.

Section Six: Research Experience and Proposed Research

Please complete all questions in this section as fully as possible within the specified word limit.

Please summarise your research experience to date: this could include research projects you have been involved in, papers/articles you have published, submitted or are preparing, or conferences you have attended or presented. This question should be answered in no more than 500 words.

For the statement of motivation, please describe in no more than 300 words your reasons for applying to UBEL and how your skills base and experience prepare you for doctoral study.

Please note you are not expected to submit a full research proposal at the preliminary application stage. It is important your research is summarised as concisely as possible. Applicants invited to make a full application will then submit a full research proposal.

External Collaboration

Please complete this section if you will be undertaking any collaborative activity during your research. Note that collaborations should be outside of higher education institutions and involve knowledge exchange. Furthermore, the DTP anticipates each funded student will take part in at least one placement of some form.

Your proposed supervisor may need to provide information to help you complete this section.

Please note: while applicants are required to answer this question, the DTP understands that you may not have made arrangements for external collaboration at this early stage.

Section Seven – Placement

For studentships starting from October 2024, Research in Practice has been introduced as a core component for all ESRC-funded students. One component of this is that all ESRC-funded students should have the opportunity to complete a high-quality placement in academia, policy, business or civil society organisations as part of their training.

Each placement should provide a student with the opportunity to develop their skills and networks outside of an academic context and gain industry experience. Placements may also have the potential for students to make an impact early in their career and help to address real world challenges.

All ESRC funded students will be expected to undertake a placement during their studentship, and funding for this is included as part of the standard +3.5 year studentship offer. Students who do not undertake a placement will not receive the additional three months of funding.

You will be asked to provide the category of placement that you aim to complete. Further information regarding placements can be found on our webpages: <https://ubel-dtp.ac.uk/ubel-placements/>

Section Eight – Confidential Personal Information Monitoring Form

You will be asked to complete a mandatory confidential personal information monitoring form before you can submit your preliminary application. ESRC require DTPs to collate equal opportunities data.

Staff involved with the assessment of the content 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

Section Nine - Widening Participation Additional Information

Our ESRC studentships are open to candidates who fulfil the academic and residential criteria outlined in the 'Application Guide for 2026 Entry'. We are also keen to widen participation in the studentships and recognise that candidates may wish to supply additional information about their academic or personal backgrounds which can be considered during the selection process. Please note this section of the form is to inform a sub-panel of UBEL DTP staff your special circumstances and the difficulties you may have overcome in achieving your education.

This form allows you to provide further background information to your application that you may wish to be considered during the selection process. This section is to inform a DTP sub-panel of any special circumstances and the difficulties you may have overcome in achieving your education. This section is not for outlining the topic or content of your proposal or how your work aligns with equality, diversity and inclusion.

We are committed to addressing inequalities in participation in our doctoral training programme. The UBEL DTP encourages applications from all under-represented groups, including people with disabilities, ethnic minorities (especially Black British and British Bangladeshi), lower income families and mature students.

Consequently, we encourage you to be clear in this section, whether sex, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or asylum seeking/refugee status has impacted your achievements.

This form will be reviewed by a separate sub-panel of DTP staff, with subsequent recommendations made to Group Panels and DTP Board in line with our policy outlined above. Staff involved with the assessment of your preliminary application will not have access or be permitted to view this form.

Please note that while this question is a mandatory component of the form, if you do not want to answer this question or feel that this section does not apply to you, please write “Not Applicable” in the free text box.

Section Ten – Declaration

Holders of ESRC studentships are required to abide by the terms and conditions of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide, a copy of which may be found here: <https://www.ukri.org/publications/esrc-postgraduate-funding-guide/>

You will be asked to declare that you accept the terms and conditions of the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide.

Extra information to consider

Feasibility of study

ESRC expects students to submit their thesis by the end of their funded period. With this in mind, we strongly encourage students to consider the feasibility of their study within the studentship timeframe. It is particularly important for applicants to consider how you will mitigate any disruptions to your study.

Supervisory Arrangements

At the full application stage you will be expected to re-confirm your supervisory team (both principal and co-supervision). UBEL will expect you to provide details of the supervisor's research experience and how this fits with your proposed thesis topic. Your principal supervisor should also provide a clear statement as to how your proposed research links with their own and that of their immediate research community and indicate what the potential significance/impact of the proposed work is likely to be.

ESRC Steers

Please note that at award stage, DTPs are required to ensure that we award offers to applications that match the following ESRC steers:

- Two applications that will use of Advanced Quantitative Methods (AQM)
- Two applications that use ESRC Datasets
- Three applications that use interdisciplinary research which straddles other research council remits

If your preliminary application is successful, you will be asked if your proposed research will meet any of these steers. A full list of ESRC data sets is available at the end of this guidance document.

It is not a mandatory requirement for candidates to meet one of the ESRC steers, but it may be beneficial to your application.

Submitting your application

You must press the Submit button to complete the preliminary stage of the application process. You will still be able to edit your application up to the closing date of **Monday 10 November 2025 23:59 (GMT)** but if you have any issues doing this, please email ubel-dtp@ucl.ac.uk

Selection process at the preliminary stage

When you submit your application, it will be routed to a pathway team consisting of academic colleagues in the DTP. Note that this will depend on your choice of principal pathway, rather than your academic department. They will consider preliminary applications based on research area, supervisory team and candidate qualifications. You will be informed w/b 15th December whether you have been invited to make a full application.

Updates will be made available in your Survey Monkey Apply account. **Survey Monkey Apply will also email information to you (using the email address you have provided on your application), so ensure you check any junk mail folders in case notifications are sent there.**

If you are not successful at this stage, you will also receive an email notification from the system and the full application form will not be available to view in your Survey Monkey Apply account.

Full application for ESRC funding

If you are successful at the Preliminary stage, you will be invited to make a full application via Survey Monkey Apply. This application requires a full research proposal, training plan, references, further details about your supervisory arrangements and information about whether your research will meet ESRC steers (including an Advanced Quantitative Methods application if applicable). This will be due by **Monday 02 February 2026 23.59 (GMT)**.

Guidance notes for the Full application will be made available on the website and via Survey Monkey Apply to candidates invited to make a full application.

List of ESRC datasets

Please note all resources are accessible via the UK Data Service (<https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>) unless stated otherwise.

Big Data resources

- Administrative Data Research Network (adrn.ac.uk)
- Business and Local Government Data Research Centre (blgdataresearch.org)
- Consumer Data Research Centre (cdrc.ac.uk)
- Urban Big Data Centre (ubdc.ac.uk)

Biosocial resources

- Understanding Society Biosocial Sweep
- 1958 National Child Development Study Biosocial Sweep
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing Genome-Wide Association Study
- Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children
(bristol.ac.uk/alspac/researchers/data-access/)

Election resources

- British Election Study
- British election study ethnic minority surveys
- Scottish Election Studies
- Welsh Election Studies
- Northern Ireland Election Study
- Scottish Referendum Study
- Local Election Studies Database

Employment resources

- Skills and Employment Survey Series
- Workplace Employment Relations Surveys

International comparative resources

- European Social Survey
- Harmonised European Time Use Study 2000 (The data from the Harmonised European Time Use Study 2015 will be available from March 2016 and will offer comparative opportunities through a harmonised dataset)
- International Social Survey Programme (<https://www.gesis.org/issp/home/>)
- Multinational Time Use Study (<http://www.timeuse.org/mtus.html>)

Linguistics resources

- British National Corpus
- British Sign Language Corpus

Longitudinal resources

- British Household Panel Survey
- Understanding Society
- 1958 National Child Development Survey
- British Cohort Study 1970
- Next Steps (Longitudinal Study of Young Persons in England)
- Millennium Cohort Study
- UK Census Longitudinal Studies
(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/paidservices/longitudinalstudies>)
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

Qualitative resources

- Timescapes (<http://timescapes.researchdata.leeds.ac.uk/>)
- Poverty and Social Exclusion Qualitative Surveys
- Ritual, Community and Conflict Ethnographic Dataset on Ritual
(<http://www.anthro.ox.ac.uk/ritual-community-and-conflict>)
- Access Research Knowledge Qualitative Archives on Ageism and Conflict
(ark.ac.uk/qual/ageism/)

Other resources

- Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK: Research Surveys 2012
- Northern Ireland Life and Times
- Kids' Life and Times
- Young Life and Times Survey