

Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership

Applications for funding from 2025/26

Guidance for applicants

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Open-Oxford-Cambridge DTP offers doctoral studentships for postgraduate research in the arts and humanities across our three consortium universities: the Open University, the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge. There are two routes to apply for funding:

- **Standard route competition:** Applicants must design and propose a doctoral research project to be supervised by faculty members at one of the consortium universities. Approximately 85% of the DTP's awards are made via this route.
- **Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) competition:** Comprising approximately 15% of awards, CDAs support research in collaboration with a partner organisation. Projects are jointly developed by faculty members and an external partner. Applicants are invited to define their approach to the advertised project in discussion with the supervisors.

Black and Global Majority studentships initiative

The OOC DTP is committed to addressing under-representation in Arts and Humanities doctoral study. In our 2024/25 competition, a **minimum of ten awards** are available for Home fee status Black and Global Majority students applying via the DTP's standard route competition. A **minimum of two** of these studentships are available for candidates who identify as Black or Mixed Black, Bangladeshi or Mixed Bangladeshi, and Pakistani or Mixed Pakistani, since these groups are disproportionately under-represented in doctoral study in the Humanities. This is a positive action initiative under the Equality Act 2010. Further details: <https://www.oocdtp.ac.uk/black-and-global-majority-studentships>.

Note on terminology: Global Majority refers to people who identify as Black, Asian, Mixed and/or have been racialized as 'ethnic minorities'; these groups represent over 80% of the world's population. The DTP recognises the complex and contested nature of such collective terminology and will continue to strive for clarity of expression in this and future initiatives.

Award duration

Normally, those new to doctoral study and working on a full-time basis will be offered an award of **three years and three months** (39 months). Funding is adjusted on a pro-rata basis for part-time students. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) expects award holders to submit their doctoral thesis by their award end date. In certain circumstances and at certain times, however, award holders may apply to the DTP for an extension to their award and therefore to their AHRC submission deadline. The total funded period, including any extensions, shall not exceed four years (full time equivalent).

Award value and benefits

A full award through the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC DTP offers:

- Payment of university fees throughout the funded period;
- A tax-free maintenance grant for your living costs at the [UK Research and Innovation](#) (UKRI) minimum rate, which increases each year in line with inflation (£19,237 for 2024/25);
- An additional stipend of £600 per annum for CDA students, as a contribution towards costs incurred by working with the partner organisation;
- The opportunity to apply for a studentship extension on the basis of individual training and research needs or to support a professional placement;
- Additional support for research expenses, individual skills training, and/or development opportunities, e.g. conference participation, language training, research visits, placements;
- Other benefits including Disability Support Allowance (DSA), maternity, paternity, parental and adoption leave, and funded extensions to cover sick leave.

B. SUMMARY OF SELECTION PROCESS

The first stage of the selection process will be completed by the university through which you have applied for an Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC DTP studentship. On the basis of local recruitment and selection procedures, each university will nominate a select number of applicants to be considered by the DTP. For the standard route competition only, the admitting university will submit a statement of support for each candidate that they nominate. Completed by a member of the department or faculty to which you have applied for doctoral study, this will comprise a 250 word subject-level assessment of the quality and feasibility of your research proposal, in relation to (a) its originality and the current state of the field and (b) its feasibility in the context of the time and resource limitations of AHRC-funded doctoral study.

At the second stage of the selection process, your application will be assessed by one of four DTP Studentship Selection Panels, which will comprise senior academics from the Open University and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The Studentship Selection Panel members will review and score applications individually before meeting to discuss and rank the applications. Assessment by the Studentship Selection Panel members is on the basis of your OOC DTP Application Form, and will be made in reference to the subject-level assessment provided by your university. Panel members will **not** have access to academic references or any other documents that you might have submitted during your application for admission.

At the final stage of the selection process, the Studentship Selection Panels' scores will be moderated and combined into two ranked lists by the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC DTP Management Board: one list for standard route studentship applications, another for Collaborative Doctoral Award applications. The Board will then agree the number of awards to be made.

Selection criteria used by OOC DTP Studentship Selection Panels

DTP Studentship Selection Panels will look for evidence that your proposed research is clearly articulated and well-conceived ('quality and feasibility of proposal') and that you have the appropriate skills and experience to complete a doctorate in the field proposed ('preparedness for research'). This evidence will be evaluated in relation to sections three and four of the OOC DTP Application form, i.e. the 'Research proposal' and the 'Preparedness for research' sections. Please note, scores are weighted, with 60% of a total score attributed to the 'quality and feasibility of proposal' and 40% to 'preparedness for research'.

Category	Descriptor	Score	Quality
Quality and Feasibility of Proposal (60%)	Promising, ambitious and original project, matched by the applicant's strengths. This is highest priority for funding. The proposal has clearly articulated aims and focus, and is feasible within the given time and resource limitations. The research proposed is well situated in the relevant literatures, and the project is well conceived. The research methodology is appropriate. The proposal clearly shows the potential impact of the research.	16-18	Excellent
	Well-conceived and viable project which also demonstrates the applicant's potential. The proposal is original and rigorous. It is feasible within the timeframe.	13-15	Very Good
	Project requires honing and development but has clear potential and viability. The proposal has originality and rigour but could be better designed or elaborated. Despite good potential, there are one or more areas for obvious improvement.	10-12	Good
	Poorly-conceived project or overworked subject. The proposal does not display originality. It does not engage with the relevant literature; weak methodology. Should not be funded.	7-9	Fair
	The proposal has significant and serious flaws, and should not be funded.	4-6	Weak
	No identified project; general indication of interests only. Should not be funded.	1-3	Poor
Category	Descriptor	Score	Quality
Preparedness for Research (40%)	Excellent background knowledge and research-related skills for the proposed project. Applicant demonstrates outstanding potential and preparedness in relation to skills (such as languages or transferrable skills), training and previous research or fieldwork experience. Any skills gaps have been identified and there is a feasible plan to address them early in the proposed project.	16-18	Excellent
	Solid background knowledge but may require further specific training. Applicant demonstrates strong potential and preparedness in relation to skills, training and previous research or fieldwork experience. Any crucial skills gaps have been identified and there is a plausible plan to address them.	13-15	Very Good
	Gaps in background knowledge, which could be remedied by guided reading. The applicant shows satisfactory potential and preparedness in relation to skills, training and previous research or fieldwork experience. Most of the small and large skills gaps have been identified and there is a plausible plan to address them.	10-12	Good
	The applicant shows some potential and preparedness in relation to skills, training and previous research or fieldwork experience. Some skills gaps have not been identified or the plans for addressing such gaps may not be plausible within the timeframe.	7-9	Fair
	The applicant has not identified the skills or preparation necessary to the project, and there are significant gaps that mean the project is unlikely to reach a successful conclusion.	4-6	Weak
	Serious lack of subject-specific or relevant training and/or generally short on background knowledge and skills.	1-3	Poor

C. COMPLETING THE OOC DTP APPLICATION FORM

Completing and saving the form

The OOC DTP Application Form is a fillable Word document that includes a number of free text fields and some drop-down menus.

You may copy and paste text into the form fields. Text that is copied and pasted into the form will retain your original formatting. Text typed directly into the form will default to the paragraph font and size used in the form. Please adhere to the word count limits where given.

If you have any technical issues accessing or completing the form, please get in touch with the DTP on enquiries@oocdtp.ac.uk.

You are advised to save the form as a pdf before submission. Please save using the following naming convention: 'Surname, initial_University'.

Answering the questions in the form

The form is composed of three sections. Further information is given below:

Section 1. Preliminary details

Answers in this section will **not** be used in the evaluation of your application for studentship funding.

- **Surname and initial(s):** Please give your surname or family name and initial(s). Please do not include your title or full first name.
- **University:** Please list the university through which you are applying for an OOC DTP studentship: Open University; University of Oxford; University of Cambridge. Please note: you may **not** apply for studentship funding through more than one university in the consortium in any one year.
- **Department/Faculty/School:** Please list your department, faculty or school, e.g. Faculty of History.
- **Degree programme:** Please give the name of the doctoral programme to which you have applied or are currently taking (if applying as an on-course student), e.g. PhD in Music.
- **CDA title:** If you are applying for an award in association with one of the Collaborative Doctoral Award projects advertised by the OOC DTP, please give the title of the project as listed on the OOC DTP website. If you are applying for a studentship via the standard route, please leave this field blank or write N/A.

Section 2: AHRC Subject Area

Your application will be checked for subject eligibility during the first stage of review, which is conducted by the university through which you are applying to the DTP. Information used to assess subject eligibility includes: your doctoral programme; the primary subject area(s) selected on your OOC DTP Application Form; your research proposal.

The Open-Oxford-Cambridge DTP supports discipline-based projects in all of the subjects covered by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), but also welcomes interdisciplinary research and research in emerging fields of study and creative practice. To be eligible for support an application must clearly demonstrate that at least 50% of the proposed research falls within an AHRC Primary Research Area, as demonstrated by the focus of the research questions and/or concerns. The project's principal academic audience should also fall within the AHRC's remit, i.e. the research should seek to contribute predominantly to an AHRC subject. See Annex A for a list of eligible subject areas.

- **Primary area:** Please use the drop-down menu to select the primary subject area of your proposed research. If your subject is not listed in the drop-down menu, please select 'Other' and specify in the space below.
- **Secondary area:** If your project is interdisciplinary, please use the drop-down menu to select the secondary subject area of your proposed research. If your subject is not listed in the drop-down menu, please select 'Other' and specify in the space below.

Please note

The use of research methods associated with the Arts and Humanities is insufficient justification for eligibility, if your project's main concerns and expected contributions lie outside AHRC subject areas.

You should **not** submit the same doctoral research proposal to more than one DTP associated with a single university in the OOC DTP consortium. So, for example, a candidate should not seek support for doctoral research at Oxford from both the Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC DTP and the Grand Union ESRC DTP, unless applying for two different research projects.

Section 3: Research Proposal

Answers in this section of the form will be used to assess the quality and feasibility of your research proposal. You are advised to discuss your proposed project with a prospective supervisor.

Your proposal should clearly articulate the aims, objectives, originality and significance of the research. It should engage with appropriate literature, outline methods and address potential impact. It should also include a plan for completion. Please note that in-text citations count towards the word limit. You may wish to use a short author-date style for referencing; please do not use footnotes.

It is important that you write in clear, precise English, and that you express your ideas in a way that is accessible to non-specialists. The Studentship Selection Panel members will not necessarily be experts in your particular field, so it is advisable to avoid or explain discipline-specific jargon or terminology.

If you are applying for one of the OOC DTP's Collaborative Doctoral Awards, you are expected to discuss your approach to the project with the university and/or partner supervisor ahead of submitting your application. The advertised project details should inform your own research proposal, but should not be copied verbatim into the application form.

Please adhere to the word count limits where given.

- **Research project title:** Please give a brief working title for your proposed research project. The assessors understand that this is likely to change during the course of your studies.

- **Introduction:** Please introduce your proposed research project (*in no more than 200 words*). This section should succinctly outline: the main research question and/or issue that you intend to address; the broad field of study within which your research falls; the significance of your project, e.g. how it might contribute to scholarship in your particular field.
- **Research context, questions and significance:** Elaborating on the introduction, please explain (*in no more than 500 words*) the context, questions and significance of your proposed research. This section should identify the key literature in the field and explain how your research seeks to intervene in, and/or contribute to, this area of scholarship. You should set out your research questions clearly and explain why they are important. When considering the significance of your research, you should identify which disciplines and/or fields of study will benefit from this project. If relevant, you could also indicate the significance of your research to organisations and audiences outside academia, e.g. if there is potential for impact in the cultural sector or in policy.

If you are applying for one of the OOO DTP's Collaboration Doctoral Awards, you should address the potential impact and benefit of the project on the partner organisation and its audiences.

- **Research methods, project plan and timetable:** Please explain (*in no more than 500 words*) how you intend to answer your research questions as set out in the previous section. This should address your research methods and a project plan and timetable.

Methods: Your focus here will vary depending on your discipline and research topic. This section may address: key materials and/or sources for your research (e.g. texts, archives, collections, databases, field sites, research participants); specific research methods and/or methodological approaches; any ethical issues that you will need to address in undertaking your research

Plan: You should include a short plan for completing the project within the period of the award. This should outline the time it will take to research and write up each section of your proposed project.

Please note, the AHRC expects students to submit their thesis for examination by their award end date. Award holders who are new to doctoral study are normally funded for three years and three months in the first instance (pro rata, if part-time); award holders may be eligible for extensions to funding on the basis of research and/or training needs, up to a maximum of four years total.

- **Reference list:** Use this section to provide details of key works referred to in your research proposal, up to a maximum of twenty.

Section 4: Preparedness for research

Use this section of the form to demonstrate that you have the core qualifications, skills and experience required to successfully undertake your proposed doctorate, as well as a plan to acquire and/or develop your skills for this purpose. The Studentship Selection Panel assessing your application will **not** have access to all of the documents you submitted to your university for admission. It is important that you outline your prior qualifications and experience in this section, and relate how these have equipped you with the skills and knowledge to enable you to undertake your proposed course of study.

If you have professional experience which informs your ability to conduct the research successfully, please include here.

- **University education or equivalent:** Please use the table to provide details of **up to three** university or professional qualifications, including information on the institution, the qualification, years of study and result (if known).
- **Research-related skills: qualifications, training and achievements:** Please list **up to three** language and/or other research-related skills that you have acquired and that are **directly relevant to your proposed project**. Please do **not** include any other CV information here. For each, please list (**in no more than 30 words**) any professional qualifications, training courses and/or achievements (e.g. publication) that evidence these skills.

For example, if your research involves work on 18th-century French archives, you should indicate your competency in French and any training you may have had in palaeography. Please give brief details of any professional qualifications, training courses and/or academic achievements (e.g. prize, award or publication) that evidence these skills, with institutions and dates where relevant.

Studentship Selection Panel members understand that you will need to acquire and/or develop skills during your programme of doctoral study and training. In the next section of the form you should outline any training needs for skills you need to develop.

- **Preparedness for research statement:** Expanding on the summary CV information outlined above, please explain (**in no more than 500 words**) how your academic and professional background equips you to undertake your proposed project. You should refer to the skills and experience that will enable you to complete your doctorate successfully, whether gained via academic study or in other ways (e.g. via work experience). The DTP offers generic and tailored skills training. Please identify any research skills you would need to acquire for the successful completion of your doctorate and how you plan to address them during the course of your studies. Please ensure that you clearly relate your skills and experience to the proposed research.

Section 5: Special circumstances

The Open-Oxford-Cambridge AHRC DTP is committed to ensuring that all candidates are considered fairly and equally for funding. You may use this section of the form to outline (**in no more than 200 words**) any individual or personal circumstances that have significantly affected prior educational opportunity and/or attainment, and which have materially affected the preparation of this application. There is no need to include details of circumstances that you have effectively overcome in the past, but you may describe (for example) details of disability, chronic or acute illness, caring responsibilities, educational or socio-economic background, where the impact is recent and/or ongoing. The Studentship Selection Panel will then make allowance for this when evaluating your application, particularly in terms of 'preparedness for research'.

Information provided here will not be used in the initial scoring of your application by the Studentship Selection Panels, but might be taken into consideration during the ranking of applicants. It will not be used by the DTP for any other purposes.

Annex A: Eligible Subject Areas

1) HISTORIES, CULTURES AND HERITAGE

ARCHAEOLOGY *

- Prehistoric Archaeology
- Archaeology of Literate Societies
- Archaeology of Human Origins
- Archaeological Theory
- Maritime Archaeology
- Landscape/Environmental Archaeology
- Industrial Archaeology

CLASSICS

- Classical Literature
- Classical Reception
- Philosophy, Thought and Religion
- Epigraphy and Papyrology
- Languages and Linguistics

CULTURAL AND MUSEUM STUDIES*

- Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Museum and Gallery Studies
- Cultural Studies and Pop Culture
- Policy, Arts Management and Creative Industries
- Cultural Geography
- Conservation of Art and Textiles

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

- Area Studies (if focus is culture, history, language or religion of specific regions)

HISTORY*

- Cultural History
- Political History
- Imperial/Colonial History
- History of Science/Medicine/Technology
- War Studies
- Religious History
- Economic and Social History
- American Studies
- Post-Colonial Studies

INFORMATION/COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

- Information and knowledge management

LAW AND LEGAL STUDIES*

- Jurisprudence/Philosophy of Law
- Human Rights
- Criminal Law and Criminology
- International Law

- EU Law
- Public Law
- Comparative Law
- Common Law, including Commercial
- Law Regulated by Statute
- Law Relating to Property
- Legal History

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

- Archives
- Information and knowledge management
- Computational studies

PHILOSOPHY*

- Political Philosophy
- Philosophy of Mind
- Aesthetics
- Metaphysics
- History of Ideas
- Language and Philosophical Logic
- Epistemology
- Ethics
- History of Philosophy
- Philosophy of Science and Mathematical Logic
- Philosophy of Religion

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES*

- Diplomacy and International Relations

THEOLOGY, DIVINITY AND RELIGION*

- Old Testament
- Modern Theology
- Judaism
- Islam
- Liturgy
- Systematic Theology
- Church History and History of Theology
- New Testament
- East Asian Religions
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Jainism
- Sikhism
- Alternative Spiritualities/New Religious Movements
- Atheism/Secularism
- Inter-faith Relations
- Contemporary Religion

2) CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

DESIGN

- Architecture History, Theory and Practice
- Design History, Theory and Practice
- Digital Art and Design
- Product Design

DRAMA AND THEATRE STUDIES

- Theatre and Society
- Performance and Live Art
- Theatre and History
- Theories of Theatre

MEDIA*

- Media and Communication Studies
- Television History, theatre and criticism
- New Media/Web-Based Studies
- Film History, Theory and Criticism

MUSIC

- Traditional Music
- History of Music
- Music and Society

- Popular Music
- Composition
- Classical Music
- Musical Performance
- Musicology

VISUAL ARTS

- Fine Art History, Theory and Practice
- Photography History, Theory and Practice
- Art Theory and Aesthetics
- Community Art including Art and Health
- Installation and Sound Art History, Theory and Practice
- Ethnography and Anthropology
- Digital Arts History, Theory and Practice
- Applied Arts History, Theory and Practice
- Art History
- Design History, Theory and Practice
- Film-based media (History, Theory and Practice)
- Time-based media (History, Theory and Practice)

3) LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

- American Studies
- Interpreting and Translation
- Lifewriting
- History and Development of the English Language
- Literary and Cultural Theory
- Post-Colonial Studies
- Scandinavian Studies
- Asiatic and Oriental Studies
- Middle Eastern and African
- Italian Studies
- Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin Studies
- English Language and Literature
- Creative Writing
- Comparative Literature
- French Studies
- Celtic Studies
- Medieval Literature

- Ethnography and Anthropology
- Australasian Studies
- Comparative Studies
- German, including Dutch and Yiddish
- Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages and Literature
- Gender and Sexuality

LINGUISTICS*

- Textual Editing and Bibliography
- Syntax
- Semantics and Pragmatics
- Phonetics
- Language Variation and Change
- Lexicon
- Linguistic Theory
- Morphology and Phonology
- Applied Linguistics
- Linguistics (General)

Note

* These are primary AHRC subject areas, but some research in these fields falls under the remit of another research council.

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