Grand Union DTP ESRC Studentship Application Form

For entry in 2025-26

Please ensure you have read all guidance available on the [Grand Union website](#) and provided by the relevant partner institution before completing this form.

It is important that you adhere to the word limits; responses over the limit will be redacted.

1. Applicant Details

First Name:

Surname:

2. Research Programme / Institution Details

Host Institution:

DTP Pathway ([see list here](#)):

Degree Programme (this must be an accredited programme available on the Pathway, [see eligible programmes here](#)):

You may apply for multiple pathways with separate applications, please list any other Pathways for which you are submitting a separate application:

3. Research Summary

Candidates for PhD and DPhil programmes: summarise your proposed research in a way that is accessible to a non-expert reader (the GUDTP panel reviewer may not be from your discipline), including its relevance and potential implications. The panel will also have access to the more extensive research proposal submitted with your University application.

If you are applying for a **Collaborative Studentship**, include details of the specific [Collaborative project](#).

(**max 400 words**)

Candidates for Masters + Doctoral programmes (1+3.5/2+2.5*): provide a doctoral project statement outlining (a) your intention to undertake doctoral research, (b) your anticipated (general) area of research focus, and (c) how the Masters degree relates to your progression to a doctorate. The statement should be accessible to a non-expert reader, and include details on project relevance and potential implications.

Note: the ESRC does not fund standalone Masters programmes, applicants must be intending to carry out doctoral research and this should be reflected in the application.

(max 1000 words)

If you are uncertain which type of statement you should provide, please contact the DTP.

Word count:

4. Personal Statement

Please provide a personal statement to support your application, commenting on your motivation and suitability for doctoral research and the proposed project. You should include relevant details of personal and career achievements, professional experience, and your personal circumstances.

The DTP is committed to ensuring that all candidates, regardless of academic and professional backgrounds, are considered fairly and equally for funding. This section can be used to note any personal/educational challenges you may have overcome, and in doing so, demonstrates your potential and capacity for postgraduate study. This might include periods away from study, caring responsibilities, or socioeconomic background. (**max 400 words**)

Word count:

5. Impact and Collaboration

Maximising the academic, societal and economic impact (or benefit) of social science research is a core principle for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and is an important component of an ESRC studentship. In support of this, the ESRC actively encourages students to collaborate with external organisations (academic and non-academic outside of their institution) to maximise the wider impact of their work.

Please describe how your proposed research has the potential to have an impact, either in society or academia (or both). You may wish to explain the potential benefits and why you feel the research matters, and/or how it might challenge perceived wisdom in your discipline.

Consider and outline potential opportunities for collaboration with external organisations during your studentship. Examples might include collaborating with external partners to conduct your research, or completing a short-term project or internship with an organisation for general professional development.

Do note that your application will not be penalised if you do not have existing collaborative arrangements and there will be support to develop these opportunities, if selected for an award. (**max 400 words total**)

Word count:

6. Prior Research Methods Training

This section *must* be completed in full by all candidates. Responses will be used to inform the length and structure of funding that is appropriate to you, if your application is successful, but will not be taken into consideration for the assessment of your application. Applications with blank or incomplete entries for this section will not be considered for ESRC funding.

The ESRC expects all DTP-funded researchers to develop a competent understanding of debates in their discipline; an overview of the philosophy of social research and how it informs design, methods and analysis and representation of findings, and an understanding of a range of research techniques.

Please give full details of the prior research methods training you have (or will have) undertaken within your current/previous undergraduate and Masters training programme, listing the research design and qualitative and quantitative methods courses you have taken. Please include individual module or course titles and the weighting in the degree.

If you are applying for a 1+3.5 or 2+2.5 award we understand this section may only be able to be completed in brief at this point.

Other relevant training

Please provide details of any other relevant training or experience (for example, work-based training).

7. Steered Awards (Optional)

In addition to core awards, the Grand Union DTP will offer a small number of ring-fenced awards which specifically focus on (a) advanced quantitative methods, (b) data skills or (c) interdisciplinary research. These are particular areas of focus for the ESRC. If you wish to be considered for one or more of these awards, please complete the relevant section(s) below.

You may already have some prior experience or training in these skills/areas. However, if you do not, you will be supported to develop these skills during your PhD.

If you wish to be considered for any of the steered awards as listed below (AQM, Data Skills and/or Interdisciplinary), please confirm that you have discussed the relevance of your application with your proposed supervisor(s) and/or pathway lead:

I have discussed this with:

My supervisor(s):   Yes   No

My pathway lead: Yes   No

7(a) Advanced Quantitative Methods (AQM) Awards

At least three AQM awards will be offered to students using advanced quantitative methods in their research. The expectation is that the research design and analysis will deploy methods that extend beyond the standard expectations in your field.

Aspects of proposed AQM may include the following, depending upon the subject area and proposed research:

- Advanced methods of data collection and data analysis techniques
- Use of large and complex data sets (admin data, digital data, census data)
- Specific experimental, quasi-experimental or evaluation methods
- Advanced use of data and programming skills (including AI and e-Research tools)

If you wish to be considered for an AQM award, please explain how your research will use advanced quantitative approaches, statistical skills, or methods that are regarded as advanced within your subject specialism (**max 150 words**).

Word count:

7(b) Data Skills Awards

At least three data skills awards will be offered to students intending to use large and complex data in their research. This includes survey data and 'big data' (social media, administrative, transactional and geospatial data), unstructured commercial data (such as loyalty card databases), as well as data created through digital interactions between people, places and organisations, using either qualitative or quantitative approaches.

Examples of proposed data skills that you will use during your PhD may include the following, depending upon the subject area and proposed research:

- Quantitative and qualitative data analytics skills
- Data engineering from a range of sources
- Checking and monitoring data integrity
- Curating data and writing efficient statistical programme code

If you wish to be considered for a data skills award, please explain how large and complex data is a substantive focus of your research, including any details of datasets that you plan to use (**max 150 words**).

Word count:

7(c) Interdisciplinary Research Awards

At least three interdisciplinary research awards will be offered to students whose research is explicitly interdisciplinary in nature and straddles the social sciences *and another research council's* remit. The proposed research should include substantive interaction between the relevant scientific areas; it should be at least 50% social science but no more than two thirds.

Examples of Pathways' previous interdisciplinary research are:

- Development, Policy and Practice: international development and science, technology and research (EPSRC)
- Economics and philosophy (AHRC)
- Geography and the natural sciences (NERC, EPSRC) and the humanities (AHRC)
- Psychology and clinical neuroscience, psychiatry, pharmacology, population health, computer science and engineering science (BBSRC, MRC)
- Social Policy and Intervention with clinical psychology, epidemiology and public health (MRC)

If you wish to be considered for an interdisciplinary research award, please explain how your research reaches beyond the social sciences (**max 150 words**).

Word count:

8. Overseas Fieldwork and Language Training

If you plan to undertake overseas fieldwork or difficult language training during your doctoral programme, please provide brief details. Please note that this should be mentioned at the point of application in order to be eligible to apply later for relevant financial support from the ESRC. (**max 150 words**)

9. Prior Research Council (UKRI) Funding

Have you previously received funding from a UK Research Council for postgraduate study?

Yes

No

If yes, please list Research Council, programme and University below.

Thank you for your application. Please note that the DTP Office will notify only successful studentship candidates, with the majority of studentships awarded in April and May.

If you do not receive an award offer and have questions about whether you are under consideration for funding for your course, please contact the relevant department at your chosen institution.