



HDR UK-Turing Wellcome PhD Programme in Health Data Science Application Information 2021

Summary

This four-year programme in health data science is led by Health Data Research UK and supported by the Wellcome Trust. It includes one year of foundational training followed by a three-year thesis project. The programme is a collaboration between Health Data Research UK, The Alan Turing Institute and seven partner universities; the universities of Birmingham, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester, Oxford, University College London, and Queen’s University Belfast.

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This document provides guidance for applicants and details of how to apply. We also recommend that you review our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ document).

About the Programme

This four-year funded cohort-based doctoral programme provides an in-depth training for graduates interested in bringing their statistical and computational skills to health data science.

All studentships are taken in partnership with a home university, which will be the awarding body for the doctorate degree, where the student will be registered. The programme includes an initial year of foundation training followed by a three-year research project. Students will join a cohort with colleagues studying across the UK coming together regularly throughout the first year for training events. The first cohort will begin their studies in October 2020.

Year 1: Foundation Training

The foundation year will include a series of training events intended to strengthen students' skill-sets and provide them with knowledge and insight into the activities of HDR UK and Turing researchers. These events will enable informed decisions of their PhD research projects and supervision teams for Years 2-4. Throughout the foundation year each student will be allocated a personal tutor at their home university to support and guide their development.

The foundation year will focus on four major activities:

- The **Common Core** – a series of in-person and/or digitally delivered courses designed to introduce students to the fundamental concepts and methods of mathematical, computational, biological, and health data investigation.
- **Immersion**s - a series of workshops, led by our partner universities around the UK, to introduce students to the major challenges being tackled by health data researchers. Immersions will enable students to explore possible PhD projects in discussion with potential supervisors and will include hackathon-type events intended to allow students to tackle a real-world data challenge whilst simultaneously providing an opportunity for the development of team working skills.
- Personal and Cohort **Development** – the challenges of working in complex health data projects across institutions and sectors can be a daunting task for early career researchers. Our students will be able to draw upon the expertise, experience and advice of our academic, NHS and industry partners to develop the collaboration and leadership skills that will support them to drive forward the ambitious projects that they intend to pursue.
- Health Data Science **Projects** - For example, the 2020 cohort will include a Covid-19 Challenge in which students will address a Covid-related research

question supervised by experts in quantitative methods and substantive health science.

Year 2-4: Thesis Project

Each student will select a three-year research project at the end of the foundation year. Projects could be proposed by students or selected from a list of proposals by potential supervisors. We strongly encourage joint supervision teams covering a range of skills and backgrounds. As supervisors may be from any of our partner universities, some project choices may require students to transfer their registration to a different partner university at the end of their first year, subject to approval.

Location Start Date and Duration

Location

Students will be registered and based at one of our seven partner universities:

- University of Birmingham
- University of Cambridge
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Manchester
- University of Oxford
- University College London
- Queen's University Belfast

As this is a national programme, studentship awards will be spread across our partner universities. Students will be able to indicate on the application form the universities in which they are interested, as well as providing any additional relevant information for their choice eg caring responsibilities or personal circumstances. Some awards will be available only at selected universities and/or co-funded with non-academic partner institutions

During the foundational training year students will attend training events led by our partner universities and institutions around the UK. Training courses may be residential, requiring periods of up to a week away from their home university, provided that health restrictions and health guidance relevant at time allow these to be conducted safely; otherwise, events will be held online.

The programme will provide students with accommodation and travel expenses during residential training. For more details please see our FAQ.

Start date and duration

The next round of applications is open for students who will begin their studies in October 2021. This is a four-year programme.

Full time/ part time

Studentships are available on a full time or mixed mode basis. For more details please see our FAQ.

Award

Studentships awarded for this programme include the following support:

- Tax free student stipend (Year 1 rates of £19,919 for those based outside London and £22,278 for those based in London, with increases each year).
- PhD registration fees at the UK student rate and college fees where required. Candidates with an EU or Overseas Fee Status will be required to demonstrate they are in receipt of an additional scholarship, or a partial fee-waiver from the university concerned, covering the difference between Home and EU/Overseas fees. The programme does not accept self-funded or partially self-funded students.
- Research expenses
- Travel costs, including registration fees and childcare or any other caring responsibility cost
- Transition costs at the end of the studentship to help you move to the next stage of your career

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our programme is fully committed to creating a diverse and inclusive research culture. We welcome applications from all applicants and in particular those under-represented in STEM subjects and academia. In all aspects of the PhD programme, we will:

- seek to understand the challenges and barriers to equality in order to eliminate discrimination, creating an environment where differences are valued;
- promote a culture of inclusion, recognising and celebrating difference and acknowledging the benefits achieved by diversity of thought and experience;
- create a safe, non-judgemental space where we can discuss any issues that arise relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and support one another to understand and acknowledge a range of perspectives;
- embed equality, diversity and inclusion across all levels of the programme and in everything that we do;
- educate our community and raise awareness in all areas relating to equality, diversity and inclusion ensuring our commitment to EDI is understood by all.

We also recognise that there may be individual circumstances that we need to be aware of. We aim to accommodate specific needs and personal circumstances, but are reliant on applicants sharing this information with us.

To discuss an adjustment to the application process please contact our team directly at phd@hdruk.ac.uk or on +44 (0)20 3862 3379. There is also a section on the application form where applicants may make us aware of individual circumstances.

You may already know what adjustments you require, or you may like to have a confidential discussion around your options. Further information relating to communicating your requirements can be found in the FAQ.

We will treat any information you disclose to us as sensitive and will process it in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. You find out more information about how we handle your personal data in our Privacy notice.

Eligibility and assessment criteria

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to apply for this programme applicants should meet one of the following criteria:

- Hold or expect to hold a UK bachelor's degree of at least an upper second class (2.1) in statistics, mathematics computer science, physics or an allied discipline* (or equivalent qualification for non-UK applicants); or
- Hold a bachelor's degree of any outcome/discipline and be able to demonstrate their suitability through additional qualifications or experience in mathematics, statistics, computer science, physics or an allied discipline (e.g. a master's degree or research experience).
- Examples of allied disciplines:
 - Engineering
 - Machine Learning
 - (Health) Data Science
 - Robotics
 - Systems biology
 - Bioinformatics/biostatistics
 - Epidemiology

To be accepted on the programme, applicants will also need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Successful admission to the specified degree programme at one of our partner universities. Students will be expected to meet the admissions requirements of that department and university, but students do not need to hold the offer at the point of application.
- At least two satisfactory academic or relevant work placement/employment references.
- Students will need to provide acceptable proof of legal right to study in the UK or ability to satisfy the current requirements of UK Visa and Immigration.

Assessment criteria

We are looking for applicants who can demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:

Criterion	First Stage (Shortlisting)	Second Stage (Interview)
Expertise in mathematical or statistical sciences.	Y	Y
Practical experience of computer science or programming skills.	Y	Y
Clear motivation to develop and apply their quantitative skills in a health data science setting.	Y	Y
Understanding of some aspects of working collaboratively at the intersection of disciplines and, in particular, the data and life sciences		Y
Emerging communication skills and aspiration to develop these across a broad audience.		Y
Awareness of the mission of Health Data Research UK and the ethical and societal considerations around conducting research with health data.		Y

The information on the above table, and available spaces at home universities, will be taken into consideration to select successful candidates for the programme. Candidates are able to select the universities they would and would not consider in the application form.

Application Process

Timeline

Application stage	Key Dates
Applications open	23 st September
Applications close	1 st December
Interviews	Week of 2 nd and 3 rd February
Outcomes communicated	5 th March

How to Apply

Applicants apply through our [Flexigrant application system](#). The application form will ask for details of your experience and why you are interested in applying to the programme. For more details about what is asked for on the application form please see the FAQ.

You will also need to submit the following:

- Details of two referees (who will be invited to submit a reference through the system)

The deadline for applications is 1st December 2020 at 12:00pm GMT.

Applicants must also separately apply to the partner university they wish to attend, and we advise checking local application deadlines. All offers will be conditional on applicants gaining admission to the relevant partner university. For more details please see the FAQ.

Assessment process

Applications will first be checked for eligibility and then will undergo a first stage review. This will involve applications being triaged by a member of the programme team and a longlist of applications being reviewed by academics from our partner universities. Successful applicants will then be invited to the second stage of the assessment process, which is an interview either in London or via remote video conferencing.

HDR UK reserves the right to reject applicants who do not meet the criteria at any stage. Due to the large number of applications anticipated it will not be possible to provide feedback for applicants not invited to interview.

Further information

For further information please see our FAQ.

Questions can be emailed to phd@hdruk.ac.uk or can be discussed by phoning +44 (0)20 3862 3379.