

Q&As from the Wessex One Health Doctoral Programme Webinar

Questions on International Studentships

Q: How many of these positions are offered to international students?

A: We expect to offer around three, but a maximum of five of these studentships to international students.

Q: Could you clarify what is meant by "a small number of international fee waivers will be available"? What specific expenses do these waivers cover—tuition fees, stipends, research costs, or other associated expenses?

A: At the current time we have fee waivers agreed for three international students. The fee waivers cover the international fees (~£26K per year). As the studentships already include the student's stipend and research costs, the student does not have to cover these costs.

Q: Re the international student fees, is the ~26K payable by the students?

A: Unless they are offered one of the fee waivers by the programme, international students would have to find other funding routes for their fees.

Q: Do you have a specific metric in mind for the international fee waivers or does it depend on the students that are offered interviews?

A: There are no specific metrics - students will be selected for interview based on the merit of their application and eligibility for their chosen projects.

Q: The residency requirement may create challenges for international students applying. Would it be possible to make the process more accessible for international applicants?

A: The residency criteria are set by host institutions and cannot be changed.

Q: What if the international student has not lived and has no residency in the UK?

A: Our programme has some options for students in this situation. Projects hosted at the Universities of Surrey, Sussex, or Exeter may accept international students with no UK residency, if the partner institute is in agreement. Please contact project supervisors directly to discuss – email addresses are on our webpage.

Q: When do the 3 years count- I will only be a UK resident for 3 years by October 2025, is this okay to apply?

A: The applicant must have 3 years residency in the UK by 28th Feb 2025 (submission deadline).

Q: Would additional international students be accepted if they were willing to pay the international fees?

A: No, there is a 30% cap on the number of international students we can accept.

Q: I read on the project descriptions on the website that some of the projects will be conducted jointly with some partner institutions. Some of the institutions requires security clearance, how do international students go about this?

A: Please contact the relevant project supervisors to discuss this.

Q: Would someone who has lived and worked in the UK for the past 5 years but is not British be required to apply as an international student?

A: Yes, unless they have settled status, pre-settled status or indefinite leave to remain.

Q: With regards to the international student fees does this apply to ROI students?

A: No, ROI students are considered home students.

Q: Will that be £26K per year for international students or for the whole program?

A: Its £26K per year

Q: The 3 places offered for international students are for international students living outside the UK or they need to have the minimum years of residency in the uk? I wasn't sure to whom those 3 places were available for.

A: The international studentships (between 3 and 5), will be available to anyone who is selected at interview and meets the eligibility criteria of the institution where their chosen project is based. Please contact the relevant project supervisors to discuss eligibility.

Q: Can international students apply to other scholarships if selected in order to cover their fees?

A: Yes, if appropriate they can apply for additional funding to cover the international fees. However, we can only accept 30% international students onto our programme.

Q: If an applicant already worked at one of the institutes and did the security clearance at that time, does that waive the residency requirement?

A: No, residency and security clearance are two different requirements.

Q: If you hold a settled status and have finished a degree in Uk, do you count as a UK student?

A: Yes, those who have settled status, pre-settled status or indefinite leave to remain count as UK students.

Q: where should I reach out with questions regarding if I count as a UK student?

A: Please send your details to WOH@surrey.ac.uk, and bear with us while we try to respond to queries.

Questions on the Application Process

Q: Would you recommend us to contact supervisors before submitting our application?

A: Yes, it is a good idea to contact supervisors to make sure you understand the projects, but it is not a requirement. If you are shortlisted for interview, you *must* contact supervisors.

Q: I applied already, but I wasn't sure if it went through because I didn't receive any confirmation on my email. Is that expected?

A: Apologies, but automatic email receipts are not sent from the system. However, once submitted you should see a message on the screen telling you that you application has been submitted successfully. Going forward, we will do our best to acknowledge receipt of all applications on a regular basis.

Q: Are the project supervisors involved in the shortlisting process?

A: No, project supervisors are not involved in shortlisting as we are not recruiting to specific projects. However, they will be involved ahead of offering places to students.

Q: Will candidate grades be a strong determining factor during your selection?

A: If the candidate meets the baseline criteria (UK degree of 2:1, 1st class, or 2:2 and MSc) then shortlisting will be based on the information provided in the main body of the application form.

Q: Are candidates without a first degree in a science subject but a postgraduate degree in a science subject, be eligible for the programme?

A: We encourage applicants from a wide range of backgrounds who meet the qualification criteria.

Q: For the application, in how much detail would you like us to go in each section since only the life experience is capped at 100 while the others are not.

A: In page one of the application form, we have asked for specific information (education history, qualifications, work experience) which requires factual details. This will differ between applicants and for this reason we have not provided a word limit. Please provide as much detail as you think is relevant to your application. The other sections are open-ended questions,, hence we have included a word limit.

Q: For the application form we can choose up to 4 projects to apply for, so how is the final project choice determined - is this up to supervisors/students?

A: The final project choice will be determined by a combination of the ranking of the student after interview, their preferred project(s) and the approval of the supervisors on that project. For these reasons, candidates must contact supervisors ahead of interview. If ranked highly enough to be offered a studentship, candidates will be asked to rank their preferred projects.

Q: What are you looking for in a PhD student to join the programme? Is experience more important than motivation? Or being motivated without experience enough?

A: We are aware that not all applicants will have had the same opportunities to gain experience, so applications will be judged in the round with overall life experience and motivation taken into consideration at shortlisting stage.

Q: For projects led by University of Surrey, multiple projects can be selected; the rest of the projects led by different institutions, you can only select one from the list.

A: We apologise for this mistake in the system – it has now been fixed. If anyone would like to resubmit their application, please do so using the same email address.

Q: How do I rank my project choices?

A: We are not asking applicants to rank project choice at this stage. Once you get to interview and are offered a studentship we will ask for your ranking of your project choices.

Q: Would you prefer applications to multiple projects or just choosing the one project you really want to do?

A: We strongly encourage you to select more than one, and a maximum of four projects from the long list of projects.

Q: Do you regard outreach experience, along with research experience, as important to mention in the application form?

A: Yes, please mention any additional experiences you have that have informed your decision to apply for a PhD.

Q: How can we track our application?

A: It is not possible to track the application, however shortlisting outcomes will be sent out the week beginning 10th March. If you have not heard back from us by Friday 14th March, please get in touch.

Q: What will the formal interview look like?

A: Interviews will be held online. Full details of the formal interview process will be sent to shortlisted applicants.

Questions on the Programme

Q: I live in Exeter, do I have to move to Surrey for the lab parts?

A: The lab parts will form the major part of your studentship, so if you have selected projects that are based in University of Surrey, APHA, Pirbright Institute, University of Sussex, Dstl or UKHSA, you would have to move. If you have selected projects at Exeter, then you would be based primarily at Exeter.

Q: Do the projects offer work to generate fees for the students?

A: No.

Q: Do all PhD programs include lab jobs or can it be only health data science or AI related projects?

A: Please read the project descriptions, and/or contact the relevant supervisors to discuss further.

Q: Some institutions offer assistantship at the universities and are paid enabling them to pay fees. Is that allowed with this programme?

A: No, this programme does not involve studying for a PhD while working in a job.

Q: Would the work experience relevant to application' section only include paid employment or would this also include unpaid research projects carried out during our studies?

A: Yes, please include all relevant experience in this section, to provide a full account for the shortlisting committee.

Q: Is having research publications necessary to be accepted in the program?

A: No, this is not a requirement. However, if you do have publications, please give details in your application

Q: Is the entire PhD program conducted in person, or are there hybrid or online components available for international students?

A: Some of the cohort training modules will be online, however for the major part of the programme, students must be based at their host institutions in the UK.