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MEDICINE



MRC London Intercollegiate Doctoral Training Partnership

Guidance and FAQs for prospective applicants

This document is to provide guidance and information to prospective 2026-27 MRC LID Studentships applicants.

Before you start

Applicants should read through all of the information provided on

- the [MRC LID How to Apply](#) page and
- in this document

before beginning, and during, the application process.

Also, you may want to look at this MOOC: [Is a PhD right for me?](#)

The MRC LID Studentships are extremely competitive. They require effort, time and focus. Applicants should go ahead with an application if

- (a) They are prepared to invest the time and effort this application requires, and
- (b) They are ready for the rigour of doctoral study, and
- (c) They meet the eligibility criteria, and
- (d) They are certain that their application will show – with trajectory, potential, and the research proposal – that they meet UKRI skills and experience requirements, and
- (e) They believe their application is the best they can put forward (and will merit a studentship worth more than GBP 120,000.00).

[UKRI skills and experience needed to win support for training \(PhD students\)](#)

Key criteria

You should:

- plan to pursue a research career
- show a clear understanding of how the research project will progress knowledge within the field

Research vision

You should have a clear understanding of:

- how your research project will progress knowledge within the field
- the project's relevance to human health

Research experience and potential

You should be able to demonstrate your plans to pursue a research career through your prior qualifications and experiences.

Personal development

You should:

- have worked with your supervisors and host organisation to develop:
 - a clear research question and project
 - training plans to develop the skills to underpin a future research career
- be aware of and seek access to career development support, such as mentoring

Communication and engagement skills

You should:

- show awareness of the context of your research in reference to societal and ethical issues
- understand the importance of public engagement activities and have an interest in developing relevant skills and experience

Guidance and FAQs

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1. What is MRC LID?

The London Intercollegiate Doctoral Training Partnership (MRC LID) began in 2015.

It is a partnership between

- [London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine](#) (LSHTM) and
- [City St George's, University of London](#) (CSG).

Our DTP is funded through a grant from the [Medical Research Council](#) (MRC).

MRC LID brings together two outstanding specialist schools to provide integrated skills training to develop a cohort of biomedical and public health scientists with world-class expertise in areas of strategic importance to UK and global medical research.

We support postgraduate research students with funding and by providing innovative and broad training opportunities

- Carefully selected research study projects.
- Cohort training and networking.
- 3-month placement outside of PhD studies.
- Mandatory training for supervisory teams and MRC LID board, to provide a positive and progressive environment for students.

What is a Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP)?

A Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) is a cohort of students funded through a grant from UKRI. A DTP creates a community of students within an exciting learning environment. Students are given funding support, training, and opportunities to collaborate with leading researchers across the partner institutions and network with other students who work in different areas.

What is a cohort?

A cohort is a group of people. On the MRC LID web pages we use cohort to mean

- (a) a group of students who were all awarded the MRC LID Studentship at the same time (for example, all awardees who started in 2023-24 academic year), and/or
- (b) all MRC LID Studentship awardees across all years.

MRC LID Studentship awardees also become part of an MRC cohort mailing list, linking all MRC-funded students at CSG and LSHTM (including students based at MRC units in The Gambia and Uganda), to enhance training and networking opportunities.

2. What studentships are available through MRC LID?

How many scholarships are available for this round?

MRC LID has 8-9 scholarships available to award for this year.

Are all scholarships open to everyone?

Of the total 8-9 MRC LID Studentship awards available

- up to two awards may be offered to international students, and
- three awards have been ring-fenced for UK ethnic minority students.

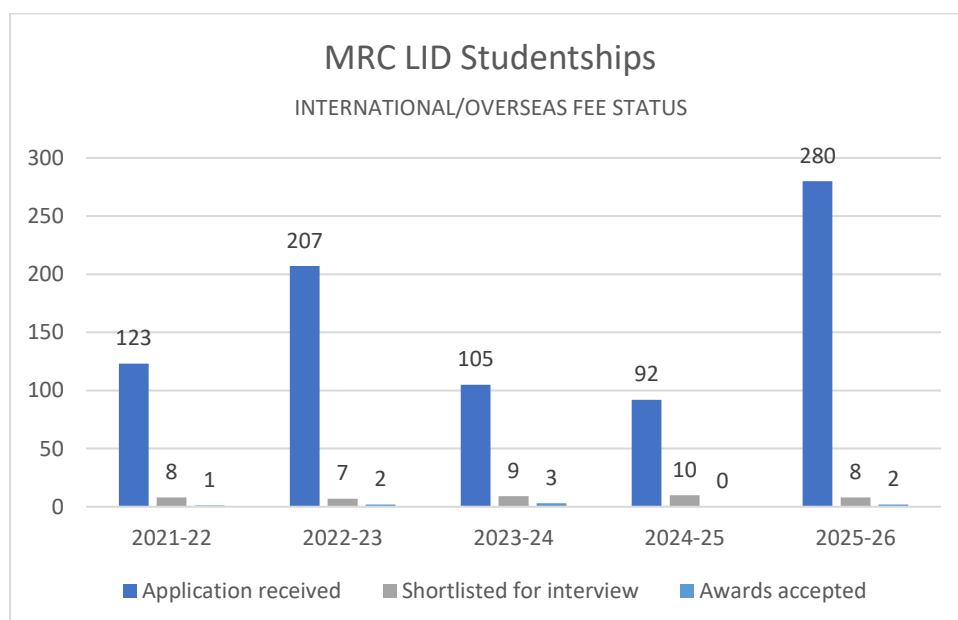
Following research by [British Future](#), the term 'ethnic minorities' is used here as it was identified the term the majority of individuals from minority groups in the UK were most comfortable with. However, MRC LID recognises that this is one term to reflect a diversity of identities and hyphenated identities (such as Black British or British Asian) and that the choice of terminology should be what the individual would use to talk about themselves.

If I apply, what is the likelihood I will be offered a studentship?

UKRI Doctoral Training Programme studentships are extremely competitive. They require effort, time and focus. Applicants should only go ahead with an application if

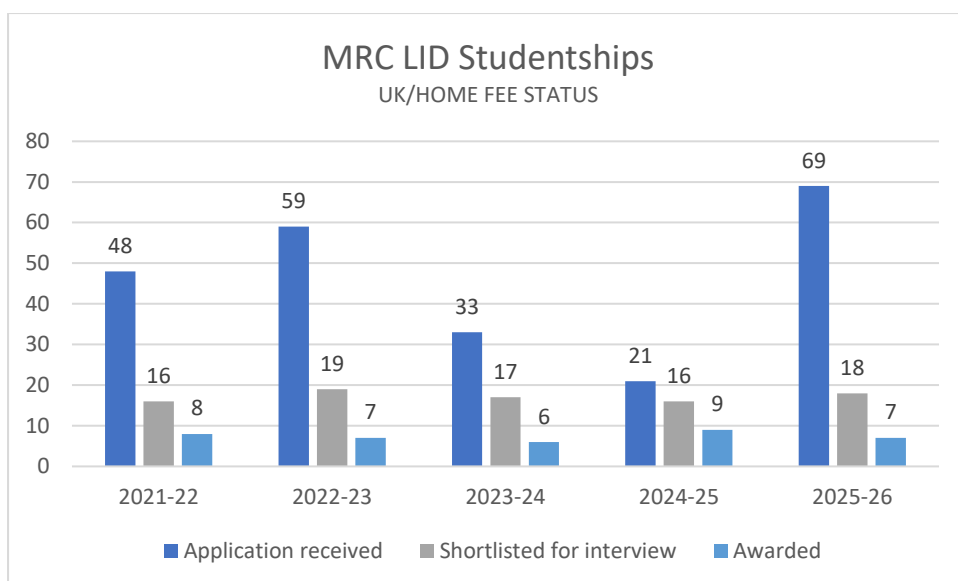
- They are prepared to invest the time and effort this application requires, and
- They are ready for the rigour of doctoral study, and
- They meet the eligibility criteria, and
- They are certain that their application will show – with trajectory, potential, and the research proposal – that they meet [UKRI skills and experience requirements](#), and
- They believe their application is the best they can put forward (and will merit a studentship worth more than GBP 120,000.00).

The likelihood of being shortlisted for interview and offered a studentship award is also affected by your fee status. The MRC has a set fee status award ratio: this means that MRC LID cannot award more than 30% of our studentships to international students. Details for the past four MRC LID Studentship application rounds are shown below.



Success rates for applicants with Overseas fee-status

- 2021-22 = 0.81%
- 2022-23 = 0.97%
- 2023-24 = 2.86%
- 2024-25 = 0%
- 2025-26 = 0.71%



Success rates for applicants with Home (UK) fee-status

- 2021-22 = 16.67%
- 2022-23 = 11.86%
- 2023-24 = 18.18%
- 2024-25 = 42.86%
- 2025-26 = 10.14%

Given the small number of studentships on offer from this DTP, it is likely that almost all applicants will be disappointed with the outcome (as the previous years' statistics show). We would strongly encourage prospective applicants to search for as many funding opportunities as they are eligible for throughout the recruitment period and also apply for these at the earliest opportunity.

Some potential sources you could choose to look at include:

- [CSG Scholarships](#)
- [LSHTM Funding](#)
- Other [MRC Doctoral Training Programmes](#) (DTPs)
- Blackbullion [Ultimate Finding Guide](#) and Scholarships hub and [list of funding not tied to a specific university](#)
- Studentship-specific websites ([FindAPhD](#), [Postgraduate Studentships](#), or [Prospects](#) are just three examples)
- [UK government PG funding suggestions](#)
- Other universities' funding (including their signposting to potential alternative funding e.g. [University of Dundee](#) or [University of Exeter](#) (as just two examples of many))
- International students may find alternative local and regional studentship funding opportunities, including governments and local employers.

In all cases, you should

- expect to do some hard work (reading up on criteria, terms and conditions, and application processes for each.
- only apply for funding you're eligible for.
- expect to submit detailed, complete applications – following the application instructions the specific funder provides – for each, separate potential studentship.

How can give myself the best chance to succeed?

The most common errors applicants make are:

- Submitting an application for one of our projects without meeting the basic eligibility criteria. Any applications that do not meet our criteria, or that are submitted for a non-advertised project, or for an area of study outside of our remit will be rejected immediately. Spending time on an application without any chance of success is a misapplication of an applicant's time and energy, and will just set the applicant up to fail. Please avoid this by checking
 - you meet the MRC LID eligibility criteria, and
 - you meet the eligibility criteria of your proposed project, and
 - you apply for one of our advertised projects, and
 - your potential and trajectory align with your application for funding.
- Not following the instructions provided when completing an application. Please use all of the information and documents provided.
- Submitting an incomplete application (not providing required information and/or documents with an MRC LID application by the application deadline). Please check that you have uploaded all of the required documents (all pages) before you submit.
- Submitting a project proposal that isn't a research proposal. A letter and/or personal statement and/or statement of purposes and/or copy of the project web page is not a research proposal. Please use the guidance provide in this document under the 'What is a research project proposal' heading to draft your project proposal for your online application.
- Not contacting the proposed supervisory team to discuss your plans and proposal in advance of finalising your application and submitting it. Or only contacting the proposed supervisory team in the days leading up to the deadline, without giving them enough time to review a draft or to respond. Communication with a prospective supervisor is an essential step in the PhD application process: supervisors are an essential source of knowledge and support for an applicant. Please contact the proposed team as soon as possible. (Please also understand that many staff will be on annual leave over the Christmas and New Year period, and therefore may not respond to emails or will respond slowly. Ideally, you should contact your proposed supervisors as soon as possible and outside of the December holiday period.)
- Submitting an application that does not fit – where the review and assessment panel/s cannot see how a selected project fits with an applicant's study and career potential and trajectory.
- Not taking the time to find out more about postgraduate research degree study (and how this differs from undergraduate and taught programmes). And, therefore, submitting an application which does not show some understanding of what research degree (PhD) studies entail. If you have no experience or understanding of postgraduate research degree study in the UK please make sure that you speak to someone for advice (for example, a personal tutor if you are currently undertaking undergraduate study) or do some online research so that you are aware of what you're applying for.
- Applicants who already have a PhD qualification, or are currently undertaking one, and therefore will already have one qualification at this level, are unlikely to be funded by MRC LID regardless of how excellent their application may be.
- Use of AI – where there is a high likelihood of AI use indicated or at the very least flag AI-written concerns to the reviewers applications may be rejected (please see the FAQ on research proposals for more information).

As the statistics show, most applicants will not be offered an award. However, prospective applicants have no chance of being successful if they do not submit an application.

If you have followed all of the guidance we provide and are not made an offer of funding we hope you will still feel that this gave you opportunities to learn about yourself and the funding application process, and provided experiences and guidance which may be useful for the next application you make.

3. Are there different types of studentship funding available?

ROUTES

MRC LID Studentships are available via two potential routes

- 1+4 Studentship route
- +4 Studentship route, which provides funding for a PhD.

The 1+4 route which provides funding for a one-year Master's degree and a four-year PhD. This route is only available to applicants who *do not* hold (or expect to hold) a suitable Master's or equivalent programme by the start of the studentship. This route is only available where there is

- a) a need for Master's level training, due to no prior qualifications at this level,
- b) or a relevant change of direction in an applicant's career trajectory.

(International applicants should also note that UK Home office may have some visa limitations for applicants who wish to study at the same level as they have before/are currently studying at.)

The +4 (or 4-year) PhD programme is for students with relevant Master's or equivalent training. Students will apply for specific research projects at the outset and will be expected to take some taught modules (usually during Year 1 or 2), to widen and deepen their knowledge and understanding of their field. Applicants who have suitable qualifications and/or skills for their proposed programme should apply for the +4 route only.

Our +4 route is the route through the majority of awards will be made. This is for the standard duration of research degree study. Under this route students may still undertake some taught modules and courses to expand and develop their skills.

The terms 1+4 and +4/4-year are based on full-time equivalent study. Where it is possible to study part-time the routes would be available over a longer duration.

4. What funding support do these scholarships give?

MRC LID pays studentship awards using the [advertised UKRI Studentships](#) rates for the duration of the studentship award.

An [MRC LID Studentship award](#) (at 2025-26 UKRI annual rates) pays

- GBP 5,006.00 FTE to the institution for tuition fees (this will be topped up by the awardee's primary institution to cover the Home/UK fee rate) and
- GBP 22,780.00 FTE to the student (this tax-free stipend at the UKRI Studentship rate includes the UKRI London weighting) and
- Up to GBP 5,000.00 FTE pa contribution towards research training and support grant (RTSG) and
- Up to GBP 300.00 FTE pa travel/conference allowance.

The UKRI rates quoted are for the current academic year only. Next year's rates will be published by UKRI in early 2026.

Rates are shown at the full-time equivalent (FTE) amount. Any students who are registered for part-time study and/or only part of the academic year would have their award funding pro-rated accordingly.

Are there additional funding benefits on this scheme?

There is additional funding available for training and for placements. The additional funding is awarded on a competitive basis.

Is there a difference between studentships and scholarships?

For the purpose of the MRC LID Studentship scheme there is not. We use the terms 'scholarships', 'studentships' and 'funding' interchangeably.

5. Can I study for a PhD on a part-time basis with an MRC LID Studentship?

All projects offered are offered at full-time mode. It may be possible to study part-time, depending on the research degree project you select. Please check the specific web page for your project which will indicate whether your proposed project is available for part-time study or not.

Part-time is only available at 50% of full-time. This equates to approximately 20 hours, or 2.5 days, per week.

A full-time 4-year award is for 4 years. A part-time 4-year award is for 4 years FTE = 8 years at the PT rate.

A full-time 1+4 award is for 5 years. A part-time 1+4 award is for 5 years FTE = 10 years at the PT rate (2 years Masters + 8 years research degree).

If you wish to apply for a part-time studentship, please discuss this with your potential supervisor before submitting your application.

6. Why choose MRC LID instead of another MRC DTP?

The research environment at both partner institutions is vibrant and exciting. Students have opportunities to get involved in groups and work at both CSG and LSHTM.

There is an active, supportive cohort community both for the DTP and the wider student body across both institutions.

The MRC LID scheme requires students to undertake a 3-month placement which is not directly linked to their PhD. Students who have undertaken their placements have all agreed that it has broadened their skills and perspective, and will be useful in their post-doctoral career.

7. Can I find out about other students on this scheme, and what they think?

Some of our students have kindly provided information about their research projects, training and placements to provide an overview of the scheme to prospective applicants. You can hear from them on the [MRC LID Applicant Workshop](#) recordings page, and also read the [current and past MRC LID cohort's advice for applicants and registered students](#).

A [full list of past and present MRC-funded students](#) is on the MRC LID webpages.

8. Can clinically qualified students apply for these studentships?

Yes, although there is no enhanced or higher stipend for clinically qualified students and clinical training cannot be conducted in parallel with the PhD programme.

9. When would I be expected to start my studies if my MRC LID application is successful?

At the start of the next academic year (September 2026). All MRC LID students are expected to attend registration & induction week at LSHTM in late September, followed by registration at CSG.

10. Where will I be based during the PhD?

MRC LID expects students to be based in the UK, and within reasonable daily commuting distance from CSG and LSHTM, for all periods of their study (outside of travel for fieldwork and placement, and standard annual leave/holidays).

Further information about travel for particular projects is shared on the project-specific web page.

11. What commitments am I signing up to if I am awarded an MRC LID Studentship and accept it?

All MRC LID awardees are required to

- Meet MRC LID (and UKRI) [Terms & Conditions](#)
- Attend cohort training and events
- Fully engage with the policies and activities of the DTP
- Submit a research degree thesis for the selected project within their funded period (studentship award dates).

12. How do I apply?

Please follow the [How to Apply](#) steps.

We strongly suggest that applicants

- read all of the applicant guidance documents (found on the [How to Apply](#) page) in full, and
- watch the Applicant Workshop recordings, and
- contact their proposed project supervisory team *

to get more information about the application process before starting an application.

(* Please note you should have read the information and drafted your project proposal before contacting your project's supervisory team.)

Applicants should only submit one application for an MRC LID Studentship per academic year. Please make sure you have checked you application thoroughly and uploaded the required documents for your application before submitting as the first application you submit

chronologically will be the one that we review (subsequent applications from the same person will be deleted without review).

By submitting an application for MRC LID funding candidates are agreeing to MRC LID [Terms & Conditions](#).

13. Is there a separate application process for students applying for a ring-fenced studentship?

No. All applications should be made using the same process and deadline. The MRC LID Manager and administrative colleagues will use the information provided in each application, including Part 2 data shared (from the EDI and widening participation monitoring section of the form), to identify ethnic minority students who are eligible for the ring-fenced funding.

Ring-fenced does not mean a reduction in requirements or standards. All applicants are required to meet the eligibility criteria for their primary institution and proposed project, and candidates for ring-fenced awards will be selected from those who score well at the pre-interview stage.

MRC LID expects that students invited for interview in all categories (standard and/or ring-fenced and/or international) will meet certain scoring and feedback criteria through the rigorous ranking and selection process.

14. How do I know if I'm eligible to apply for these studentships?

Studentships are offered within standard research council restrictions. To be eligible for a full studentship applicants must meet all of the [eligibility criteria](#) noted on our eligibility criteria page. Individual projects may also require additional eligibility criteria. If applicable, this will be set out on the project page.

CSG

- [City St George's, University of London Entry Requirements](#)
- [City St George's, University of London Research Degrees](#)

LSHTM

- [LSHTM General Entry Requirements](#)

15. Can non-UK applicants apply for these studentships?

Yes. Home and international students can apply for this funding.

Applicants with 'Overseas' (International) fee status should note that the maximum number of awards available for MRC LID is two. These studentships are extremely competitive. Please see FAQ2 for statistics and likelihood of success.

Will full fees be covered by the studentship for international students?

No. MRC LID Studentships only covers tuition fees to the Home (UK) fee rate. Applicants [assessed with Overseas fee status](#) will need to pay the 'top up' of their fees to the annual Overseas fee rate (that is, the difference between their studentship award value and the full overseas fee rate) for the duration of their award and studies. This is likely to cost approximately GBP 25,000.00 – GBP 30,000.00 per year over the course of a 4-year FTE

PhD. Awardees are not permitted to use their MRC LID studentship funds (stipend or the additional research training and support grant or travel and conference allowances) to 'top up' fees. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to make plans for this and, where appropriate, apply for alternative top-up funding (studentships and bursaries) in advance of, or alongside, applying for these MRC LID studentships. Applicants may use personal or family funds, but they should be aware that they will need to meet [UKVI Student Visa proof of money requirements](#).

Applicants who are nationals of, and resident in, [low and middle income countries](#) (LMICs) – as defined by the World Bank – will be eligible for an institutional bursary from CSG or LSHTM. This separate bursary will cover the remaining fees (that is, the difference between their studentship award value and the full overseas fee rate) for the duration of award. This will apply to applicants who are offered an MRC LID Studentship award. Further details about their bursary offer will be shared with those who reach this stage at the time of interview selection.

As an LMIC applicant how do I apply for an LMIC bursary?

There is no separate application for an institutional LMIC fee top-up bursary. Eligibility for this support will be assessed and determined alongside your MRC LID application.

Any applicant who is a national of, and permanently resident in, a low- to middle-income country who is offered an MRC LID Studentship award will be offered an institutional fee top-up bursary at the same time.

16. What qualifications and/or experience do I need to have to apply?

Our baseline criteria are noted on the [eligibility criteria](#) page. These are required entry levels for the institutions.

Any additional requirements for specific projects are noted in the information about the specific project.

Applicants should note that awards are highly competitive. Therefore, it is likely that these will be made to those who have

- far exceeded the baseline academic qualification requirements, and/or
- shown suitable skills and experience, and/or
- show potential to succeed with additional training (for example, via our ring-fenced scheme).

Applicants for PhD studies across all projects should also be curious, driven, disciplined and resilient. Students need to be self-driven and able to work independently. You may find these external articles interesting:

<https://blog.genesmindsmachines.com/p/phd-level-abilities-and-character>

<https://blog.genesmindsmachines.com/p/phd-level-intelligence-or-the-graduate>

Because a PhD can feel long and difficult at times it is crucial that applicants select a project which fits within their interests and trajectory.

17. What research projects are available for MRC LID Studentships?

Projects offered by the studentship scheme for this application round can be found via the Projects List link on the [How to Apply](#) page.

The [MRC LID Projects List](#) provides a full list of available projects, with links to each project page. Each project page will provide further details about each project, links to the project supervisors, and information about any additional pre-requisite academic and/or skills requirements (additional eligibility criteria).

Where projects are co-supervised across the DTP (i.e. have a supervisor at each institution) students would be primarily registered with the institution where the first named supervisor is based.

Each project is supervised by a minimum of two academics. Applicants must contact proposed supervisors to discuss their research intentions and application well in advance of submitting an application for funding. (And at least 2-3 weeks before the deadline at the very latest.)

Every project has been assessed to ensure that it falls within at least one of the MRC LID themes, will provide students with at least one of the MRC's skill priorities, and will provide a robust research degree study.

Can I apply for more than one project?

No. Each applicant should only apply for one project. Applicants are asked to consider their choices carefully as these cannot be changed once projects have been awarded.

Applicants can note second and third choice projects on their applications. In the event that a number of excellent candidates are short-listed for the same project the MRC LID Board may consider other project options. They will use indications provided by applicants to consider whether an applicant should be offered an alternative option.

Please be aware that applicants will only be short-listed on the basis of their first-choice project (noted above). If an applicant submits more than one application their first application started and submitted will be the one processed.

Can I choose my own research project and apply for this funding?

No. Applicants who wish to apply for an MRC LID Studentship must apply for one of the projects offered on the [Projects](#) page for this academic year recruitment round only. (Applicants cannot apply for projects that were available in previous rounds, unless they have been re-advertised.)

All of the research projects offered show a primary supervisor based at CSG or LSHTM. Does this mean that I must apply to one of these institutions to be considered for this funding?

All recipients of MRC LID Studentship awards are expected to be primarily registered at either CSG or LSHTM for an approved programme of study.

Applicants should not apply for study to either institution at this stage of the process. Successful applicants of this scheme (2026-27 MRC LID Studentship application round) will be contacted by the MRC LID Manager with advice on how/when to submit an application for study to their primary institution in April 2026.

Once I've found a project I'd like to apply for what should I do?

Please read through all the information provided for the project, watch the recording about the project provided by the supervisory team, and read their suggested literature (any [DOI links](#) and other information provided). Also, you might find it useful to look at the background, work, and interests of the supervisory team members. Start considering your project proposal and write an initial draft (based on your plans, the recording and your background reading). Then, contact the project supervisory team.

Before contacting the potential supervisory team, make sure you have

- (a) watched the recording, and
- (b) done the reading, and
- (c) drafted an initial research proposal (see separate FAQs on the project proposal for details).

Please also see the FAQ about contacting the supervisory team. This will help you to make decisions about what to write in the email and what to ask in the meeting.

If you have any issues accessing the links provided for additional reading and/or the supervisory team recording please contact - by email - the MRC LID team (mrclid@lshtm.ac.uk) or the proposed supervisory team to let them know.

How and when should I contact the project supervisory team?

Once you have selected the project that you are interested in, and done your work (see answer to the question above), you should contact your potential supervisory team as soon as possible by email (please see FAQs below on how to do this). At a minimum you should be providing them with your CV and initial draft project proposal in your initial contact email.

You should contact the project supervisors to indicate your interest and start discussions no later than at least 2-3 weeks before the deadline. Please be aware that you may not receive an immediate response, and factor this into your timeline. (Prospective supervisors will also be working to other deadlines, teaching, conducting research. Also, in the UK all institutions close over Christmas and New Year. It is likely that supervisory teams will be taking time off over this period, and may not be checking emails.)

Potential supervisors are expected to respond to all potential students who contact them.

- If they believe that their project is not a suitable match, they will let you know and provide you with a little information to help with your next steps.
- If they think your draft proposal has potential, you should try to arrange a time to meet.

Meeting with a supervisor is an essential part of the application process. Please note an application may be ineligible for MRC LID funding where an applicant has not met with their proposed supervisor.

Potential supervisors are expected to meet with prospective students for their project at least once before they submit their applications. The meeting and discussion with supervisors is an opportunity for you to: get to know them a bit better; ask all the questions you might have on the project proposal, so you can build on and improve your understanding; discuss edits, rewrites and updates to the initial draft project proposal; take any tips they give you to incorporate into your application so that you can submit the best application you can.

Some supervisory teams will offer to meet with an applicant more than once. Others can only allocate one meeting to suitable prospective applicants. You will need to ascertain this through pre-meeting communications (maybe ask by email) and plan your questions and time accordingly.

Please note: Supervisors are invited to provide some input on candidate selection at a later date, but are not responsible for selecting successful candidates and cannot offer letters of support for any single candidate.

How do I start the conversation with the project supervisory team?

Contacting a proposed supervisory team is intended to begin a discussion about

- a) your eligibility for the project
- b) your potential suitability for a project
- c) questions you may have and clarifying details about the advertised project, and
- d) to gain feedback on your application (including on a review of your initial research proposal draft, if the supervisors can only meet with you once before the application deadline).

Notifying the proposed supervisory team of your intention to apply for the studentship and their project without any further discussion is not the same as contacting, and meeting with, the supervisors. Your initial contact should not be treated as if you were applying for a job either.

Here are some things to consider when first contacting your potential supervisory team by email:

- Tell the supervisor about yourself: talk briefly about your background, interests, work and research experiences so far that could be relevant for the project. The potential supervisors will be interested to meet potential PhD students and to know a bit about you.
- Mention which research project you are interested in and why this PhD project might be relevant for you. The potential supervisors want to understand your motivation with this project and for doing a PhD in the topic so they can guide you better on the process.
- Mention which route you are planning to apply for: MSc + PhD (1+4 years) or PhD (4 years). If you are planning on the 1+4 route, you should mention which Master's programme you think would be most appropriate for you. If you're not yet sure about which programme of study might be best, you can ask for advice from your potential supervisors.
- Ask if they can arrange a time to meet and mention your availability. Potential supervisors will be happy to arrange an online meeting to go through the project and answer your main questions about the proposal. (You may want to ask if this will be the only meeting and whether your draft proposal should be submitted in advance of this, for their review and feedback).
- The email should be comprehensive but succinct and straightforward. It should contain the relevant information within a reasonable length (not overly long or complicated).
- You should attach documents that can help potential supervisors to understand your background a bit better (for example, your CV or a paper that you might have published and an initial draft project proposal).
- You should copy the full supervisory team into the email in case any of them are on leave or unavailable in a given week.
- If potential supervisors do not respond to your email, it is okay to message them again in a couple of days - they might have missed the email and might actually appreciate a second contact email.

What to ask during the call with potential supervisors?

This first contact meeting is not a formal interview but a moment for everyone to meet. Potential supervisors will be keen to meet you and will try to make sure you can have all the tools to develop and submit a very good application.

You should consider the meeting to be an opportunity to find out more about the supervisory team, project offered, and research environment. And to see whether this would be in alignment with your work and plans.

- Use this opportunity to ask questions about the project, data, and methods that might not be clear to you.
- The MRC LID Studentships are a great opportunity for potential placements that can contribute to your development as a researcher. So do ask about potential placements and collaborations that they might have considered and could lead to that.
- Researchers are usually part of a larger team, so do ask them about their collaborations, and what opportunities to work collaboratively you might find within the team.
- Don't feel that you need to share anything you do not feel comfortable sharing and that might be too personal to you.

The meeting is also an opportunity for the supervisory team to find out more about you. They will want to understand your interest in, motivation for and knowledge about their project. They will be looking at your potential and how your critical thinking skills have been applied and will continue to be used to work through this topic. They will expect that you have done all of the pre-reading and a fair number will likely also expect you to have written at least a first draft of your research project proposal. (Remember that this should be in your own writing (not AI) – both the first draft and the final version submitted as part of your MRC LID application.)

Please note that some supervisory teams can only commit to one meeting with potentially suitable candidates. You should check with them and, if in doubt, plan both (a) your questions to determine whether this is the project you want to apply for, and (b) your questions for the project proposal and writing an application, in the same meeting to maximise the opportunity.

18. What questions will I be asked as part of my application?

You can review the application questions on the 2026-27 MRC LID Studentship Application Questions and Guidance document (the link is on the [How to Apply](#) page). Please also see other sections of this documents for further questions/details required.

19. What is a research project proposal?

What is a research project proposal?

This is an outline of your research topic in a few pages, which should include: research/topic area; specific research question(s); study design; data collection and analysis.

The main purpose of the proposal is to demonstrate that you have the necessary critical thinking skills, an understanding of the relevant research area, and an appreciation of the demands of a research degree.

Please read all of the information provided under this FAQ carefully. MRC LID provides a great deal of guidance and support on the content and format of a research proposal. We

expect applicants to have taken note of these details and to ensure that their project proposal has met requirements. A last-minute, rushed and/or poorly thought through research proposal that is not at a relevant, good standard will not be considered for this funding. Please note: applications will be rejected where an applicant has copied the abstract provided, or not expanded on it.

What should an MRC LID research project proposal look like?

Applicants should submit a research proposal for their chosen project, selected from the list of projects available. The information on the project advert page provided by MRC LID is a starting point only. Applicants must use the summary (or abstract) provided to expand on and develop the project outline, in their own words. They should include sufficient information in their research proposal for the MRC LID selection panel to assess their readiness for research training and doctoral study and suitability for an award.

The MRC LID board strongly encourages applicants to discuss the research project with the proposed supervisory team, and liaise with them throughout the process, so that they have an appropriate proposal to submit.

1+4 Route applicants should prepare a research project proposal of approximately 1,000-1,500 words based on an advertised project.

At the beginning of the proposal, the applicant should:

- Confirm that you are applying for a 1+4 route
- Identify which Masters programme you would like most to apply to and briefly summarise the reasons for programme selection.

+4 or 4-year Route applicants should prepare research project proposal of approximately 1,500-2,000 words based on an advertised project.

What should I include in my research project proposal?

The research project proposal should

- Identify a specific research question or hypothesis
- Summarise the relevant background information including relevant prior research or theoretical frameworks (with no more than 5 key references)
- Outline an appropriate research methodology by which the question can be addressed
- Elaborate on the potential broader impact of the PhD project (i.e., how you expect your research to be useful and to whom)
- Describe what experiences and/or technical skills you have that will help you to succeed in your chosen project and what skills or knowledge you would like to develop further during your PhD
- Describe some of the methodological and/or professional challenges you might face in completing this project and how might you overcome them

Ten [examples of past successful research proposals](#) are available for applicants to view, thanks to previous award recipients. Please note that the specific guidelines have changed since some of the proposals were submitted.

What formatting should I follow for my research project proposal?

Please submit your project proposal as a Word document uploaded to your application. (You will be prompted to do this in the application.)

- Start the project proposal document with the research project title.

- Please make sure your name is included on every page.
- Your research proposal should be approximately 1,500 - 2,000 words long (usually 3-4 pages of A4 paper, using standard margins and Arial Font size 11).
- Please do not exceed 2,000 words in total (excluding the project proposal title and your name, but including all other aspects of your proposal including paragraph/section headings and references).

In previous years there has been some leeway on this requirement. However, applicant numbers and resources mean this is no longer possible. Please note: **For this round, your application will be rejected for this funding scheme if your proposal is below 1,000 words or over 2,000 words (the maximum word count).**

Please note this additional feedback from reviewers in the last round:

- The word count is intended to ensure tight, clean, well-edited proposals. Candidates should take the time to review and edit their draft proposal with this in mind.
- Replacing paragraphs with lists and bullet points is not suitable. It does not provide depth or explanation or show understanding.
- Applicants should aim to keep their 'References' list limited to texts directly cited in the proposal. These should be up-to-date and relevant. (A long list of 'references' that have not been used in the project proposal, and are only potential a reading list for the project, takes up too much valuable space within the word limit. The reviewer will not be reading these.) These should be formatted using a recognised citation system or style. There are a large number of recognised systems; the two most widely used in medicine and science are known as Harvard (the author/date style) and Vancouver (numbering style). Whichever one is selected must be used consistently.

[What further reading should I do to prepare for writing my research project proposal?](#)

Each project page highlights some additional suggested reading and information, as provided by the supervisory teams. (This is most usually a link or two to Open Access publications.)

This should be read before you initially draft your project proposal or contact the supervisory team.

[Can I use generative AI tools to draft and develop my research proposal and other answers for my MRC LID Studentship application?](#)

MRC LID appreciates that writing a good research project proposal requires time and effort. Nevertheless, applicants should not use generative AI (such as: ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, DeepSeek, OpenAI, Otter.ai) for this task.

MRC LID is interested in you as a whole person. This means we will consider your work and life experiences (including challenges and resilience) alongside your academic achievements. We want your application to demonstrate and articulate your potential to undertake and complete a research degree (PhD), to contribute to a positive and diverse research community, and to flourish and grow as a result of an MRC LID Studentship. This requires independent writing throughout your application (rather than AI generated content that has outsourced personal experiences, thought and feeling). AI tools must not substitute your own learning and experiences, or misrepresent your understanding of the knowledge, concepts, and techniques to be used in our proposed research degree project.

The purpose of the research proposal is to show

- Your personal engagement with the topic and your creativity

- Curiosity and interest in the potential for discovery with thoughtful questions and opinions, at an appropriately high level of sophistication, about the research problem, the data, the methods, the outputs
 - Innovative, nonlinear and unconventional thinking, and the ability to combine concepts in a novel way.
- Your independent critical thinking
 - Your ability to analyse, interpret and synthesise information, and to question and verify the information available across a breadth of sources and perspectives - including any AI-generated outputs you may have come across in your reading and research
- Your selection of good, suitable references, after broader reading
- Your problem-solving skills, including consideration of
 - Any potential issues and limitations within your proposed PhD study
 - The broader societal and ethical contexts, dilemmas, and effects of your research
 - Potential mitigations
- Your understanding of, and preparedness for, self-directed research
 - Demonstrating the viability of the planned research being completed within the funded period of 4 years FTE
 - Consideration of appropriate skills and training (and any gaps to be addressed)
 - Excellent motivation for your chosen research project
- Your own non-generic writing (clearly-written, showing thought and effort (which are both key requirements for a PhD student), and within word count limit).

As one of our MRC LID application reviewers has put it:

'The use of AI is often obvious, which can leave assessors uncertain about the extent to which they are evaluating the applicant's own work or AI-generated content. This ultimately works against the applicant, as it may give the impression that they are unable to write the application independently. The assessors are not trying to select AI as doctoral candidates, but intelligent, creative and driven individuals with a bright research future.'

Also, applicants have a responsibility to ensure that they do not misrepresent or replace their own skills, knowledge and experience.

Please note: MRC LID applications may be removed during the selection process where AI checker software indicates there is a high likelihood of AI use, and/or where the academic assessors believe the project proposal has been written with the use of AI.

You may find the following interesting, and provide further reasons not to use AI:

- <https://kucharski.substack.com/p/the-shallowness-of-deep-research>
- <https://kucharski.substack.com/p/exams-wont-tell-us-whether-ai-has>
- <https://gizmodo.com/the-biggest-signs-that-ai-wrote-a-paper-according-to-a-professor-2000634580>

20. What documents must I submit with my application?

To apply for 2026-27 MRC LID Studentships, applicants are asked to provide all of the following documents:

- A completed 2026-27 MRC LID Studentship Application (online form using REDCap Survey)
- A project proposal for the selected research project
- Transcript/s for all current and completed studies

- Award certificates for all completed studies
- Translations for all transcripts and awards not in English
- Copy of the applicant's valid passport (photo page only)

Documents must be uploaded as part of the MRC LID Application prior to submission, and before the application deadline.

Incomplete applications will not be considered for this funding.

APPLICATION FORM

Where will I find the template MRC LID Application so that I know what questions will be asked?

This is available via the [How to Apply](#) page.

Do I have to answer all the questions on the MRC LID Application?

Applicants should aim to complete all questions on the application form, as far as possible and as applicable. The details provided on the MRC LID Studentship Application will be used to check that the applicant is qualified and eligible to apply for this funding, and to consider additional information alongside formal qualifications and the research proposal.

Some questions are mandatory. The form will not allow an applicant to progress or submit until these sections have been completed.

What are the contextual questions for? Why are they different than contextual flags or markers?

UK Higher Education Institutions use equal opportunities data for contextual flags (or markers) as part of undergraduate recruitment. This is where statistical data or individual characteristics can be used as a basis for placing an applicant's achievements in context, with the use of EDI markers to 'flag' to an Admissions team that a student is likely to have faced barriers to education and/or from an underrepresented group. This may then also be used for additional support for the applicant/student. Postgraduate institutions have not historically had systems in place for contextual markers.

We recognise that not everyone has had access to equal standard of education and that social or socio-economic factors (like where you lived growing up, personal circumstances and life experiences) can influence grades and work opportunities.

Traditionally, application assessments focussed on prior grades, work experience, and references to make decisions. The information provided in these areas may show an incomplete picture of each applicant, or need further explanation. And if we only use these to make assessments we are potentially missing out on some crucial details.

Our contextual questions section of the application form provides an opportunity for you to share other relevant information you would like the reviewers to know. It also enables us to consider your achievements in the context of your background in order to level the playing field and ensure we are being as fair as possible.

Evidence of contextual factors will not necessarily mean that preference will be given to an applicant, as each case will be considered on its individual merits. However, in cases where there is clear evidence that contextual factors have affected performance and achievement, and where the applicant is able to demonstrate motivation and potential to achieve, MRC LID will consider this as part of our holistic assessment of your application.

Crucially, we will never use anything you disclose in a negative way.

Why am I required to complete the Part 2 (EDI & Widening Participation) section of the Application?

As part of [MRC LID's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion](#) we ask all applicants to complete a number of equity, diversity and inclusion monitoring questions as part of their application. The information provided by applicants will only be used to (a) monitor and improve our policies, and ensure our systems and processes promote equity of opportunity, and (b) assess and deliver appropriate support.

This information will not be included in the application documents sent out to academic staff for consideration and selection.

Applicants who do not want to provide this data should complete the form, selecting the 'Prefer not to say' and/or 'Information refused' option at each stage.

Further details on

- why you are being asked to provide this information,
- who will see it (MRC LID Manager and administrative staff only, until it is anonymised and aggregated),
- how long the data will be held (securely), and
- what the DTP will do with it

can be found on our '2026-27 MRC LID Application Questions and Guidance' document (available via a link on our [How to Apply](#) page).

TRANSCRIPTS

What is a transcript?

An academic transcript states the student's name, the institution they studied at, and a list of all courses taken, all grades received and degrees conferred. It should provide full details of the degree class and grades the student received in each unit or module. An interim transcript provides similar information for degrees the student is yet to complete (it may also show the expected grade or level of award if the student is near the end of their programme of study). The Diploma Supplement provided by a large number of international institutions is not equivalent to an academic transcript.

Applicants for an MRC studentship must provide details of modules attempted and certified results of these (transcripts) of all undergraduate or postgraduate degree examinations that they have undertaken for (no matter when they obtained the qualification).

I am currently registered for an undergraduate (UG) or Masters programme (or have just finished my undergraduate or Masters study) and do not have my transcripts or certificate yet, what should I do?

Please ensure that you include your current programme of study under the Qualifications section of your application.

- For current UG students: Please also upload an *interim transcript* from your ongoing studies as part of your application.
- For current Master's students: Please also the certificate/transcripts from your undergraduate degree and an *interim transcript* from your ongoing studies as part of your application.

What is an interim transcript?

If an applicant is still undertaking a degree they should submit copies of their interim transcript/s (showing all results to date and modules/courses currently being taken) where final transcripts have not yet been issued. Applicants in this position should provide

- a) an interim transcript, if available, or
- b) print out of their student record – showing all modules taken and results, and current modules they're enrolled on.

All those awarded an MRC LID Studentship will need to provide an official transcript before they begin their MRC LID programme of study.

Can I submit transcripts that are not written in English?

Applicants who submit documents in a language other than English must provide an officially certified translation, together with the original document. Translations supported by uncertified photocopies will not be accepted.

Do I need to submit certificates if I submit transcripts for my qualifications?

Yes. Transcripts and certificates are required for each qualification. When study is ongoing an interim transcript is all that is required (because a certificate cannot be produced until the programme of study has been completed).

PASSPORT / ID

Why do you need a copy of the photo page of my passport?

MRC LID will use this as ID, for confirmation of nationality, and as part of the applicant fee assessment.

Non-UK nationals who believe that they should be classed as a Home (UK) student should provide the relevant UK Home Office document/s confirming this alongside their passport photo page. Examples include EU settled status (with proof of residency) and UK ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain).

Can I prove my ID using other documentation?

Unfortunately, no. A copy of the photo page of a valid passport is currently the only document we can accept.

21. How and when will references be requested?

Referees will not be contacted, and are not required to provide references to MRC LID, until interview shortlisting has been completed.

If you are invited for interview your referees will be contacted at that time and asked to provide a reference in advance of the interviews.

Applicants shortlisted for interview should note that referees will be contacted at this stage by the MRC LID Administration team. This will be done as soon as you accept the invitation for interview. MRC LID will ask referees to provide a reference on headed paper (signed and dated) using the text/criteria below.

Referees will be asked to

- Confirm how long they have known you and in what capacity.

- Comment on your suitability for the award, postgraduate training in general and for the particular course and research you're proposing to undertake, including your potential to succeed.
- Share their views on how, and to what extent, you've shown academic ability in terms of: ability to grasp concepts and reason analytically; motivation and perseverance in achieving objectives; and, capacity for original thought.
- Rate your intellectual ability, oral communication skills, mathematical ability, and English language skills.
- Comment on how well you work to deadlines, how well you work independently, how well you produce original work and how motivated you are.
- Assess your particular strengths and weaknesses, and of possible further training you will require to successfully complete your proposed research.

If you are a current student, they will also be asked to indicate where you rank in your student cohort.

Applicants should ensure that their referees are aware of the criteria and studentship application so that they can expect an email from mrclid@lshtm.ac.uk and appreciate why we are asking them to respond within a fairly quick turnaround time.

22. What else should I know before applying?

Use the [How to Apply](#) page for steps to apply. We would strongly encourage applicants to read through all the information and documents, and watch the Applicant Workshop and project recordings provided as part of their application preparation.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all the necessary documents are uploaded to the MRC LID Online Application prior to submission, and before the application deadline. It is not possible to send documents to MRC LID for adding to an application after the deadline.

Applicants must complete the information required on the online application portal as outlined in the guidance notes – links on the [How to Apply](#) page. Incomplete applications will not be considered for this funding.

Please note that this MRC DTP will not be able to fund a studentship to any applicants without confirmation of their degree result.

23. What happens if details submitted in my application change?

Before the application deadline:

Applicants can return to their application and make changes to it themselves, as long as they have saved the return code provided at initial submission.

After the application deadline:

Applicants should make sure that any changes to contact information are passed to the MRC LID administration team as soon as possible so that their information can be updated. (Any missing documents will not be added to an application.)

Requests for further information, invitations for interview, and notification of studentship offers will be made by email. The MRC LID will not accept responsibility if an applicant forfeits their studentship because contact email details provided are incorrect or out of date.

An applicant may select a proxy to act on their behalf if they will be away and unable to access email and/or telephone at all stages of the application (except interview). Information

about the person acting on an applicant's behalf information must be passed to the MRC LID Manager in writing (by email) by the applicant in advance.

24. What is the selection process for these studentships?

All applications will only be processed and reviewed after the deadline. All applications that are submitted before the deadline will be considered equally, regardless of the initial submission date.

MRC LID will apply a single, cross-institution approach to student recruitment to ensure that the students with the most potential are selected. Selection criteria will include applicant potential, demonstrable aptitude for research, evidence of motivation for undertaking a PhD and an understanding of what it entails, academic background or suitable equivalent skills and experience.

Policies at both institutions are in line with Equity, Diversity & Inclusion strategies, and aim to support fair, explicit and consistent admission and scholarship procedures.

After the deadline each application will be checked by the administration team (for various administrative tasks, such as proposal word count and fee status assessment). Assuming all is well, each application is sent to supervisory team panels for scoring, review, and comment. Following this, applications will be selected for progression to the next stage, where they will be independently reviewed by two separate members of the MRC LID Board and Associate Board for scoring and feedback. Applications will be discussed and reviewed by the MRC LID board – as a group – for interview selection. The board will take into account the application documents, comments from supervisory teams, independent feedback, and applicant's potential. About 20-24 applicants will be shortlisted for interview. This multi-layered review process takes time but ensures that the board has a few views for decision-making, and no application is dismissed without very careful consideration by a number of different academics.

Interviews for short-listed applicants are held over 1-2 days. Each interviewee will be assigned a formal interview time slot of 45 minutes. During the interview the panel (of 3-4 academics) will ask questions about your work and skills, interest in the project you've applied for, any prior research undertaken and your part in that. All interviews will be conducted by video meeting.

25. What are the key dates for 2026-27 MRC LID Studentship applications?

When is the closing date for applications?

The deadline is 23:59 (GMT) on Wednesday 14 January 2026, as noted on the [How to Apply](#) page. We are unable to accept applications received after the deadline.

When will I find out whether my application has been successful?

All applicants will receive an email with the outcome of their applications (both unsuccessful applicants and those invited for interview). We aim to advise every applicant of the outcome to their application by Friday 20 March 2026 at the latest.

How will I know if I have made it to the interview stage?

Only 20-24 applicants will be invited for interview.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview by Friday 20 March 2026 at the latest. They will also receive additional information and guidance on the interviews, and a link to more MRC LID general tips and hints).

Interviews will take place on Thursday 9 April 2026.

Interviews will be held on one day by multiple panels via video meetings. Following the completion of our interview day/s, decisions will be confirmed by email with all details finalised before mid-April 2026 at the latest.

Application for Admission/Study to Primary Institution

- Applicants who will be primarily registered at LSHTM will be expected to submit an application for study, via our online applications system, once they have been made a studentship offer. This will be noted in the offer of funding email/letter.
- Applicants who will be primarily registered at CSG will not be required to complete an admissions application, but may be asked to provide original documents and additional information at a later stage. The Postgraduate team at CSG will contact awardees to confirm.

26. I can't find accessible versions of the information I need or application form. What should I do?

We are sorry that our current information and formatting has created unintended barriers for you. Please contact the MRC LID Manager by email – via MRCLID@lshtm.ac.uk – to discuss a potential solution. It would be useful to share the issues you are facing, any software you currently use (e.g., screen readers or voice to text), and any support that would be helpful. We can then work with you on a plan to support your application.

27. Who do I contact if my question is not answered by information found on the website?

Applicants will be contacted with further details at each stage of the process, as required.

If you have questions that cannot be answered after reading all of the information on the MRC LID web pages, please send an email to the [MRC LID Manager](#) who will respond as soon as she is able to.