

DPHil in Cancer Science Programme Admissions

FAQ's

This document has been put together to answer the most common questions we receive from potential students wanting to submit an application to the DPhil in Cancer Science programme.

If you have a query regarding the DPhil in Cancer Programme which has not been answered here, then do get in touch via – cancertraining@medsci.ox.ac.uk

Brief overview of the DPhil in Cancer Science

Launched in 2020, the programme provides research-based doctoral training for cancer researchers from clinical, biological, engineering, mathematics, and statistics backgrounds. The programme is unique and distinctive in offering integrated training across the following themes: Immuno-Oncology; Cancer Big Data; Novel Therapeutics; Early Cancer Detection. It builds on Oxford's outstanding research record in these areas, spanning both the University and Hospital Trust.

Who is eligible to apply?

The scheme caters to researchers from a wide range of backgrounds. There are four types of application welcomed as described below:

- **Application Track 1 – Clinical Trainees.** Qualified doctors at all stages of training from the foundation training to higher specialist training.
- **Application Track 2 – Medical Undergraduates.** Medical students who are currently undertaking a primary medical qualification (MBBS, MBChB or equivalent). At entry, we will be looking for evidence of completion of at least the first two years of a primary medical qualification and achievement at the level of an upper-second or first-class honours degrees (or iBSc).
- **Application Type 3 – Non-Clinical/Fundamental Scientist (Biological background).** Science graduates that hold (or be predicted to achieve) the equivalent of a first-class or strong upper second-class undergraduate degree with honours in biological, medical, or chemical science, as appropriate for the projects offered.
- **Application Type 4 – Non-Clinical/Fundamental Scientist (Maths/Physics background).** Science graduates that hold (or be predicted to achieve) the equivalent of a first-class or strong upper second-class undergraduate degree with honours in engineering, mathematical/data, *or* physical science, as appropriate for the projects offered.

Am I eligible to apply for the Black Leaders in Cancer Studentship

This scheme is aimed at students from Black heritage backgrounds pursuing a DPhil in a cancer-related field. It is open to people who self-identify as being from a Black heritage background, including a mixed background, for example: Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Mixed background (to include Black African, Black Caribbean or other Black backgrounds).

You can read more information on the above eligibility requirements in [CRUK's frequently asked questions](#)

Am I eligible to apply for the GSK Studentship

GSK studentships are only available for non-clinical applicants applying via our Track 3 (Non-Clinical/Fundamental Scientist - Biological background).

The GSK funded Studentships come with their own dedicated funding, so applicants are only able to choose from the set list of 5 eligible projects included in this GSK project booklet. The two rotations which take place in the first year need to be taken across the GSK project offering, so rotations cannot be mixed with those listed in the other project booklets. This ensures the funding is used in line with the partnership's goals, which focus on particular areas of research.

I am not a UK national, am I eligible to apply?

Applications from international students (including EU) will be accepted, however the funding from CRUK only covers fees at the home rate, so successful international candidates will be awarded top-up funding from elsewhere in the institution to cover the remaining fees. For more information about funding please see [Funding — University of Oxford, Medical Sciences Division](#).

GSK Studentships are only funded at the home rate.

If I am an international student, do I need a visa to study on the Programme?

Refer to the University's [Visa and Immigration pages](#) for more information. Should you be successful in being offered a place on the course, we will help advise you on securing a visa.

Can I apply to the course to study part time?

No, all places offered on our Programme are for full time study only.

Can I submit an application with my own project?

No, you can only submit an application listing projects that are advertised in our project booklets which are published on our [website](#). Refer to the relevant booklet based on which track/studentship scheme you will be applying via.

Should I contact the project supervisor before applying?

Whilst it is not compulsory as part of your application, it is strongly suggested that students contact supervisors of projects they are interested in applying for prior to application.

How many projects do I need to select?

You are required to list and rank 3 projects in order of preference when submitting your application.

Under the section, 'Field and title of research project'. You should input the project number and an abbreviated version of the project name for each of your chosen projects if it will fit.

The primary supervisors for these projects should be entered in the field titled 'Proposed supervisor name'.

Where can I find the projects available for me to apply to?

Our clinical and non-clinical project booklets can be found on the relevant tab on our [website here](#).

Please ensure you refer to the relevant project booklet based on which track you will be applying via.

The GSK Booklet can be found [here](#).

Do I have to do rotations in the first year?

Yes, all successful non-clinical students enrolled to the Programme will be required to undertake first year lab rotations.

How will non-clinical rotations work?

Rotations will consist of two 6-month periods in different research groups and will provide students with a broad base of experience and the opportunity to explore different aspects of research.

At the end of each of the rotations, students will be required to submit a project write up and deliver a presentation to a selected scientific audience. After the 2nd project rotation, students will be asked to decide on a final 3- year project for the remainder of their DPhil.

I do not have a Master's degree; can I still apply?

A Master's degree is not compulsory, we welcome applicants from science graduates that hold (or are predicted to achieve) the equivalent of a first-class or strong upper second-class undergraduate degree with honours.

I do not have any publications; will this affect my application?

Prior publications are not required, but research experience and a track record demonstrating an interest in research may be an advantage.

We look for applicants who can also demonstrate a commitment to and passion for a career in cancer research.

Who can I have as referees on my application and do I need to have 3?

Academic references are strongly encouraged, though you may use up to one professional reference provided that it is relevant to the course. Your references will need to support your intellectual ability, academic achievement, motivation and ability to work in a group.

Whilst you must register three referees, your application may still be assessed if two of the three references are submitted by the course deadline and your application is otherwise complete. Contact cancertraining@medsci.ox.ac.uk to discuss.

When will interviews take place?

Formal interviews will take place online in January across all tracks. Successful applicants who are shortlisted will be invited via email.

Due to the high volume of competitive applications across the Track 3 applicants, we will be piloting the use of initial screening meetings for the 2026 admissions round. Up to 30 of the top-ranked candidates will be invited to participate in an online initial screening meeting which will be a structured discussion of around 10-15minutes with a select panel of the Cancer Science Programme's Directors. This discussion will serve as an opportunity to assess each candidate's research experience, suitability, and motivation for applying to the programme.

The strongest candidates will be invited for a formal interview for the DPhil in Cancer Science.

I'm a clinician, is a GMC license is required in order to apply for the clinical track of the Cancer Science program?

No, we do not require clinical applicants to have a GMC license in order to apply for the programme.

I am currently a medical student but will be qualified by the time the course starts. Which track do I apply via?

Applicants that will be clinically qualified by the start of the course date in October 2026 should apply via our Application Track 1 – Clinical Trainees. This track is for qualified doctors at all stages of training from the foundation training to higher specialist training.

Can I apply for a scholarship?

All applications submitted by the December deadline will be considered for relevant Oxford scholarships if a successful offer is made.

There are some Oxford scholarships available which have additional eligibility criteria and you are required to submit a separate application. Please [use our fees, funding and scholarship search tool](#) to identify these opportunities and find out how to apply.

Do I need to provide evidence of English proficiency?

If your first language is not English, you may need to provide evidence that you meet this requirement. Please refer to [the relevant graduate admissions page](#) for more details and the test requirements.

I come from a low-income country; can I apply for an application fee waiver?

The university has a list of eligible countries where fee waivers are applicable. More information on eligibility and how you can apply can be found on the [relevant graduate web pages](#).

As part of the application process, college preference is asked. Does the preference affect how the application is assessed or funding is provided?

No, your college preference has no bearing on your application and how it is assessed. However not all colleges will accept graduate or Cancer Science students. Please refer to the college preference tab on the course page for information on eligible colleges you can choose from.