

DPHil in Cancer Science Programme

FAQ's

This document has been put together to answer the most common questions we receive from potential supervisors wanting to submit a project for the DPhil in Cancer Science programme. It will also provide information on first year lab rotations for our non-clinical students.

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.

On average we fund 12 full-time studentships each year, with places split across our four different tracks (see below for further details).

Who is eligible to submit a project?

Principle Investigators (PIs) from across Oxford University's medical, physical, engineering, data, and mathematical sciences are welcome to submit their project ideas. Supervisors must also be independently funded investigators in posts that are expected to continue until the end of the Fellowship (September 2030 – September 2031)

If you are interested in submitting projects in collaboration with industry partners for our non-clinical/fundamental scientists, please get in touch to discuss.

Can I submit more than one project?

No. Each primary supervisor can only submit one project for consideration in this call. You can however be listed as secondary supervisor on another project.

How many Supervisors do I need on the project?

Each project must have a minimum of 2 supervisors including the primary. Whilst multiple secondary supervisors are allowed, especially as we encourage collaborative research, we recommend keeping this to no more than **4 per project**.

When considering supervisors please keep in mind that this programme is distinct from departmental and project DPhil's in that it was established to provide researchers with opportunities to establish novel collaborations. There should be a clear rationale for including the named supervisors and collaborators on your application.

How do I submit my project?

PI's are required to fill in an application form which needs to be returned to us via email – cancertraining@medsci.ox.ac.uk by **Friday 12th June 2026**.

You will need to outline the fundamental scientific premise of the project, the clinical/translational relevance of the project and the potential impact on patient care, and the training opportunities

available to the student. If you would like to develop a project for a specific trainee already identified, please feel free to do so.

For those projects applicable to non-clinicians, you will also be required to give a brief outline of a project suitable for the 6-month rotation which forms part of the overall 3-year DPhil.

We ask for the project proposal to be formatted into word so as to allow an easy transfer of information to the project booklet.

Who can apply to my project?

There are four types of application we welcome:

Application Type 1 – Clinical Trainees. Qualified doctors at all stages of training (from foundation to higher specialist training).

Application Type 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*. 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*. 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

We expect the majority of projects to be applicable across all 4 tracks, however subject to review, we do accept a small number that are only open to Track 1 or 2 applicants.

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.

Can I have more than one student for my project or in my lab?

No, only one student can be recruited to each rotation project.

PIs will also not be permitted to have more than two students within a lab in a four-year period.

How will introducing rotation projects affect my chances of recruiting a student?

Providing rotational projects allows the students to work in two different areas to enable them to make an informed decision on which direction they would like to pursue for the remainder of their DPhil.

Depending on the training, knowledge gained and their overall experience during the 6-month project, the student may choose a project which wasn't necessarily their initial top preference. It essentially gives you the opportunity to attract a student who you may never have met in the first place!

Can I resubmit a previous advertised project?

Yes, a previous project which has been advertised in our booklet and was unsuccessful in recruiting a student is eligible to be resubmitted. We ask that you update any relevant figures/materials as applicable.

Any project which has successfully recruited a student on rotation cannot be re-entered into the project booklet until after the rotational period has concluded for that intake.

How are applicants reviewed for the programme?

Once applications close, supervisors receive the details of all applicants who have applied to their project. We provide a set of criteria to be used to assess each individual's suitability to undertake a DPhil. Supervisors are required to rank all applicants and return their shortlisting within the specified timeframe.

As well as the above, applicants are assessed by additional scientific reviewers. All rankings are collated, with the highest-ranking applicants in each track taken forward to interview.