

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2023-24: Interdisciplinary Bioscience (BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership)



About the course

The Oxford Interdisciplinary Bioscience Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) programme is a four-year DPhil/PhD programme supported by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) that provides innovative training for graduates from a life science, physical science or computational and mathematical science background who wish to conduct leading-edge bioscience research.

Research areas within the programme include integrative animal and plant biology, mechanistic molecular and cellular biology, and bioscience for food, industry and health (including crop science, animal health and welfare, synthetic biology, industrial biotechnology and the development of innovative approaches for drug discovery and pharmaceutical production). The majority of research projects undertaken by Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) students involve “transformative technologies”, which include advanced imaging and data analysis techniques, the development and application of new and emerging methods and technologies, mathematical modelling, ‘omic and systems biology approaches, and innovative approaches to address the three Rs. We do not support research focused on human diseases and disease processes or abnormal conditions. We support research on livestock species and managed land (for example agriculture) and support studies on wild species only when they act as suitable model to provide wider understanding of biological processes.

The programme is led by the University of Oxford in partnership with nine world-class research organisations - the Pirbright Institute, which provides the UK’s national capabilities for the study and control of viral diseases of livestock, Oxford Brookes University, and five research organisations at the Harwell Campus Oxford (Diamond Light Source, ISIS Neutron and Muon Source, STFC Central Laser Facility and the Research Complex at Harwell), which provide the UK’s national capabilities for synchrotron science, neutron science and laser science, and the new Rosalind Franklin Institute, which supports the development of new methods for life science research in areas such as imaging, spectroscopy and structural biology. We are also partnered with the Novo Nordisk Research Centre Oxford, an innovative target discovery and translational research institute and the Ineos Oxford Institute, which focuses on tackling the global challenge of anti-microbial resistance. The DTP’s training programme draws on expertise in all nine partner organisations and students will have the opportunity to learn about the facilities and expertise available across these organisations during the initial training phase. All students have a primary supervisor within one of the ten partner organisations, and a secondary supervisor from within the partnership who provides additional support and expertise.

You will undertake a four-year doctoral training programme. In your first term you are based at the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) at the University of Oxford and undertake an individually-tailored training programme that includes training in research skills such as mathematics and statistics, programming, imaging and image analysis, bioinformatics, and modelling biological processes and systems. You can also access a wide variety of additional training provided across the partnership throughout your doctoral studies.

A distinctive feature of the DTP programme is that you are required to undertake a 12-week internship or placement to gain experience of work in a professional environment and in transferable skills that will be beneficial in your future career. Areas that may be explored during internships include industrial research and development, science policy, teaching, science communication, publishing, entrepreneurship and project management.

You will have the ongoing support of the DTP throughout your studies, including an ongoing training programme in professional skills such as scientific writing, project management, CV writing and interview skills, teaching skills, public engagement and enterprise and entrepreneurship. You can also access specific training in advanced research skills that are relevant to your research interests through specialist training courses, industry-led study groups and practice-led training groups.

Course features for DTP students (not applicable to Industrial Studentships and Partner Studentships)

After the initial training phase, you will undertake two 12-week research projects in two different research groups within the partnership, which are tailored to meet the likely requirements of your main doctoral project. You are encouraged to use these rotation projects to further develop your interdisciplinary skills. Following on from the project rotations, you will undertake a three-year doctoral research project with an internationally leading research group and have access to world-class facilities and expertise.

Course features for Industrial (iCASE) and Partner Studentships

If you apply to the DTP's Industrial Studentship programme you will have a primary academic supervisor in one of the nine DTP partner organisations and undertake research in collaboration with an industrial or non-academic partner organisation. You will undertake a placement (12 weeks minimum, 18 months maximum) with the industrial partner organisation instead of a 12-week internship to gain experience of work in a non-academic professional environment.

If you apply for a Partner Studentship, at least 50% of your research will be undertaken in close collaboration with a supervisor at one of the DTP's non-University partner organisations (eg Diamond Light Source, Rosalind Franklin Institute, The Pirbright Institute), and you will be co-supervised by a University supervisor. If you undertake a partner studentship with one of the DTP's partner organisations that does not involve an industrial partner you will undertake a 12-week internship in a non-academic setting.

Partner Studentships may be advertised as specific projects with named supervisors (please see the DTP's website for details of currently available projects) or can be applied for by applying to the main DTP programme and stating your interest in being considered for a partner studentship with a named partner organisation.

Occasionally, the DTP will advertise additional fully-funded studentships with named supervisors within the partnership, depending on the availability of funding. Students recruited to these studentships will be fully integrated into the programme and will participate in DTP training courses and the 12-week internship.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Interdisciplinary Bioscience DTP and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff.

In the first year of the course, DTP students and some Partner students will be supervised by the programme directors, who will also support students in choosing their rotation projects, doctoral research project and supervisory team. Supervision arrangements for years two to four will therefore be confirmed at the end of the first year when the doctoral project is chosen.

If you are recruited to an Industrial Studentship or to some Partner Studentships or other specific studentships associated with the programme, your supervisor will be known from the outset of your studies and you will work with your supervisor and the programme directors to design and develop your training programme.

Students on the Partner Studentship programme will have a supervisor at the university at which the student is registered and a supervisor in one of the DTP's non-university partner organisations (e.g. Diamond Light Source, The Pirbright Institute).

Students on the Industrial Studentship programme will have a primary and secondary academic supervisor in one or more of the ten DTP partner organisations, including a supervisor at the university at which the student is registered, and an additional co-supervisor in the company or non-academic organisation that is sponsoring the studentship.

All DTP students have both a primary supervisor and a co-supervisor with relevant expertise when in the research phase of their DPhil.

Typically, a student should expect to have meetings with their supervisor or a member of the supervisory team with a frequency of at least once every two weeks averaged across the year when in the research phase of their DPhil. The regularity of these meetings may be subject to variations according to the time of the year, and the stage the student is at in their research programme.

Assessment

The programme has three milestones to assist you in your progress. You will be required to write a research proposal during the first year of your DPhil, in consultation with your supervisory team, which describes the background literature, aims and rationale for your project, along with a plan of work. This will be assessed by two researchers with relevant expertise to check the suitability and feasibility of the proposed project, along with your understanding of your project. This enables students to receive useful feedback on their proposed project at an early stage.

The University has two formal milestones to measure your progress, the first being transfer of status, and the second is confirmation of status, which are typically undertaken in the second and third year of your degree respectively. The exact assessment format used will vary according to discipline and department, but each typically involves an assessment of your progress by two researchers with relevant expertise.

The purpose of the transfer process is to review your project and your plans for future work, to check that you are making satisfactory progress in the development of your project, and to satisfy the assessors that your work is potentially of DPhil quality.

The purpose of confirmation of status is to provide an indication that if work on the thesis continues to develop satisfactorily, then consideration of submission of the thesis within the time remaining to complete your studies would appear to be reasonable. It therefore provides a second stage of formal progress review. Both you and your supervisors will also be required to reflect and report on your progress at regular intervals using the University's graduate supervision reporting (GSR) system.

The final assessment of your work will be based on submission of a written thesis, the exact requirements for which may vary by discipline and department, and through an oral ('*viva voce*') examination, which will be assessed by an internal and external examiner.

Changes to courses

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out above. However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or necessary for the University to make changes in course provision, either before or after registration. These may include significant changes made necessary by a pandemic (including Covid-19), epidemic or local health emergency. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>) and our page on changes to courses (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges>).

Expected length of course

	Full Time Only
Expected length	4 years

Costs

Annual fees for entry in 2023-24

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£8,960
Overseas	£29,700

Information about course fees

Course fees are payable each year, for the duration of your fee liability (your fee liability is the length of time for which you are required to pay course fees). For courses lasting longer than one year, please be aware that fees will usually increase annually. Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>).

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional cost information (below), course fees do not cover your accommodation, residential costs or other living costs. They also don't cover any additional costs and charges that are outlined in the additional cost information.

Graduate students who have reached the end of their standard period of fee liability may be required to pay a termly University and/or a college continuation charge.

The University continuation charge, per term for entry in 2023-24 is £572, please be aware that this will increase annually. For part-time students, the termly charge will be half of the termly rate payable by full-time students.

If a college continuation charge applies (not applicable for non-matriculated courses) it is likely to be in the region of £100 to £600 per term. Please contact your college for more details.

Additional cost information

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees (or, after fee liability ends, continuation charges) and living costs. However, please note that, depending on your choice of research topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, and field trips. You will need to meet these additional costs, although you may be able to apply for small grants from your department and/or college to help you cover some of these expenses.

Living costs

In addition to your course fees, you will need to ensure that you have adequate funds to support your living costs for the duration of your course.

The likely living costs for 2023-24 are published below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford. We provide the cost per month so you can multiply up by the number of months you expect to live in Oxford.

Likely living costs for one month

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£300	£470
Accommodation	£715	£860
Personal items	£180	£305
Social activities	£40	£90
Study costs	£35	£80
Other	£20	£35
Total	£1,290	£1,840

Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£2,700	£4,230
Accommodation	£6,435	£7,740
Personal items	£1,620	£2,745
Social activities	£360	£810
Study costs	£315	£720
Other	£180	£315
Total	£11,610	£16,560

Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£3,600	£5,640
Accommodation	£8,580	£10,320
Personal items	£2,160	£3,660
Social activities	£480	£1,080
Study costs	£420	£960
Other	£240	£420
Total	£15,480	£22,080

When planning your finances for any future years of study at Oxford beyond 2023-24, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of 5% or more each year – although this rate may vary significantly depending on how the national economic situation develops.

More information about how these figures have been calculated is available at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/livingcosts.

Document accessibility

If you require an accessible version of the document please contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email (graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk) or via the online form (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/ask>).