

# Applicant guidance: PhD studentships in linked administrative data

## Funding opportunity summary

ADR UK is offering new funding for [ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships \(DTP\)](#) to host PhD studentships focused on quantitative research using linked administrative data.

Funding will be available for up to 30 PhD studentships starting in October 2027. The cohort of supervisors and the students selected will join an existing PhD programme to develop exemplar case studies to promote wider use of administrative data for research.

The ADR UK website showcases flagship linked administrative datasets from across all four UK nations covering family and criminal justice, education, employment, and more, while the "[Up and Coming](#)" flyer showcases the Datasets that will become available by Autumn 2027. The flagship dataset pages contains information about the data, its research potential, and any other supporting materials such as synthetic data, explainer videos and user networks. Applications are required to include at least one of ADR UK's established flagship datasets listed on the website.

ADR UK will host an applicant webinar on 12 May 2026, which will include more information on the application process, as well as an opportunity for Q&A with prospective applicants. Registration is open via Eventbrite.

## Essential requirements

- Applications must be coordinated and submitted by the DTP Director on behalf of the partnership.
- DTPs can apply for *up to* five supervisor-led PhD studentships each.
- Individual supervisors can apply for multiple studentships; however, each application must address different research topics and/or questions. As applications must be submitted through the DTP director, supervisors must consult with their DTP director to ensure the DTP does not exceed the maximum total of five applications across its partnership.
- Studentships must make use of an established [ADR UK flagship dataset](#) listed on the website.
- Studentships must be based on accredited pathways relevant to the subject area covered by the administrative dataset(s) expected to be accessed through this opportunity.
- Funded students will be the responsibility of the ESRC DTP and subject to the same Terms and Conditions as students funded directly by ESRC/UKRI. ESRC's expectations for the content and delivery of postgraduate training it funds can be found in the [Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022](#).
- Studentships must comply with both the ESRC DTP requirements and access conditions set by the relevant public sector data owners throughout the project.
- DTPs, working through their designated institutional representatives where appropriate, must commit to supporting supervisory teams to establish remote secure access arrangements for administrative data within six months of the studentship start date.
- The cohort of successful students is expected to start at the beginning of the 2027/28 academic year.

## Eligible costs

Total funds available for this call will be approximately £3M between 2027 and 2031.

Studentships can be held on a range of different structures, i.e., a 1+3.5 (Masters followed by a PhD), +3.5 (PhD only) or 4.5year (integrated training programme) basis, which includes time for a 3-month Research in Practice placement. The actual length of studentship will depend on the structures available on the pathway and on the students' prior training.

Funding will be provided on the basis of the notional cost of a studentship and the proposed duration of the studentships.

ADR UK expects to be able to fully fund 30 studentships, but the DTP could co-fund the studentships through their existing allocation or other sources. Please contact [ADRStudentships@esrc.ukri.org](mailto:ADRStudentships@esrc.ukri.org) to discuss options for co-funding.

## Assessment process

PLEASE NOTE: offers will only be made to applications from DTPs that have a successful outcome from their mid-term review, which will be confirmed in January 2027.

Assessments and funding decisions will be made by a specially convened panel which will include a former DTP director, experts in administrative data, and representatives from the ADR UK partnership.

This Panel will consider each application package as a whole – taking into account information provided by the DTP and supervisor(s) – against the following criteria:

- Fit to the call, including:
  - alignment to the [ADR UK mission](#) to enable vital research that realises the potential of administrative data to lead to better informed policy decisions and more effective public services across various disciplines.
  - alignment to the [ADR UK Training & Capacity Building Strategy](#) to support researchers trained to analyse complex linked administrative datasets.
- The quality of the research environment and training provision to support the use of administrative data.
- Supervisory arrangements, including supervisor expertise and capacity to host a studentship, focused on quantitative research using linked administrative data.
- Plans for contributing to the growing community of administrative data researchers.

Funding decisions are expected to be communicated by January 2027.

## Application process and documents

DTPs can apply for up to a total of five supervisor-led studentship opportunities across their partnership and are responsible for coordinating the application process. A completed application package consists of two sets of forms:

Form	Who is filling it?	Notes
A	DTP coordinating the application process	<p><b>Each DTP to complete one Form A</b></p> <p>Information to be provided includes DTP’s current strengths in quantitative research, analysis, and training; existing experiences using administrative data; rationale for hosting studentships using linked administrative data; student recruitment process; and how studentships contribute to the growing community of administrative data researchers.</p>
B	Supervisor hosting the studentship	<p><b>One Form B to be completed for <u>each</u> studentship opportunity</b></p> <p>Individual supervisors can apply for multiple studentships as long as the total number of supervisor-led PhD studentship applications across their respective DTP partnership does not exceed five.</p> <p>Information to be provided includes prior experiences supervising PhD students; supervisory capabilities using linked administrative data; areas for training for the supervisor, the prospective student, or both; and desired datasets* and how they will (each) complement research topics and/or questions.</p>

*\* Note: While supervisors must host studentships that are using at least one flagship dataset, they may also include other research-ready administrative datasets in their application.*

## Application process and documents

- 12 May 2026 (11:00-12:15 UK time) – Applicant webinar (optional). [Register here](#).
- 15 September 2026 (4:00 PM UK time) – Application deadline. DTPs to submit a completed package to ADR UK via e-mail to [ADRStudentships@esrc.ukri.org](mailto:ADRStudentships@esrc.ukri.org).
- September-October 2026 – Independent Panel review stage.
- November 2026 – Panel meeting day to make collective funding decisions.
- November- December 2026 – Mid-term review exercise for the DTPs.
- January 2027 – Funding decisions expected to be communicated to DTPs.
- October 2027 – Studentships commence (unless agreed otherwise).