Nottingham BBSRC Doctoral Training Programme Applicant Guidance

Contents

If you require a different format of this document, please email the DTP team

Deadline for applications is 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 31 January 2025

The aim of these guidance notes is to help you submit an application to the Nottingham BBSRC Doctoral Training Programme. Please ensure you read the guidance carefully before finalising your application. After you have made your submission, there can be **no** amendment to your application.

About the Nottingham BBSRC DTP

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) supports research in areas including plants, microbes, animals (including humans) and tools and technology underpinning biological research. Here at Nottingham, our focus is in three research areas:

1. Sustainable Agriculture & Food (SAF)
2. Bioscience for Human Health (BHH)
3. Biotechnology for Sustainable Growth (BSG)

Within these research themes, there is a specific cluster priority area. Each cluster will focus on a key challenge or emerging research priority within its theme:

- Heat Resilient Agriculture Cluster (Sustainable Agriculture & Food)
- Biomaterials for Tissue Engineering & Drug Delivery Cluster (Bioscience for Human Health)
- Technologies for Sustainable Protein Synthesis Cluster (Biotechnology for Sustainable Growth)

The Nottingham BBSRC DTP will be offering up to 30 studentships per cohort for UK and international applicants to both the standard DTP and CASE programme. In line with UKRI guidance a maximum of 30% of the cohort can be awarded to international applicants.

The DTP award cover fees and stipend at the UKRI fee and stipend rate. Because international fees are higher than the UKRI rate, successful international candidates will also be allocated a University Fees Difference Scholarship to cover the difference between the Home Fee rate and the International Fee Rate.

If you are not sure of your fee status, you can submit an enquiry and select "I have not applied yet" as your application status. Further details available here.

The DTP are not in a position to offer any additional support to cover costs of moving to the UK, visas or NHS surcharges.
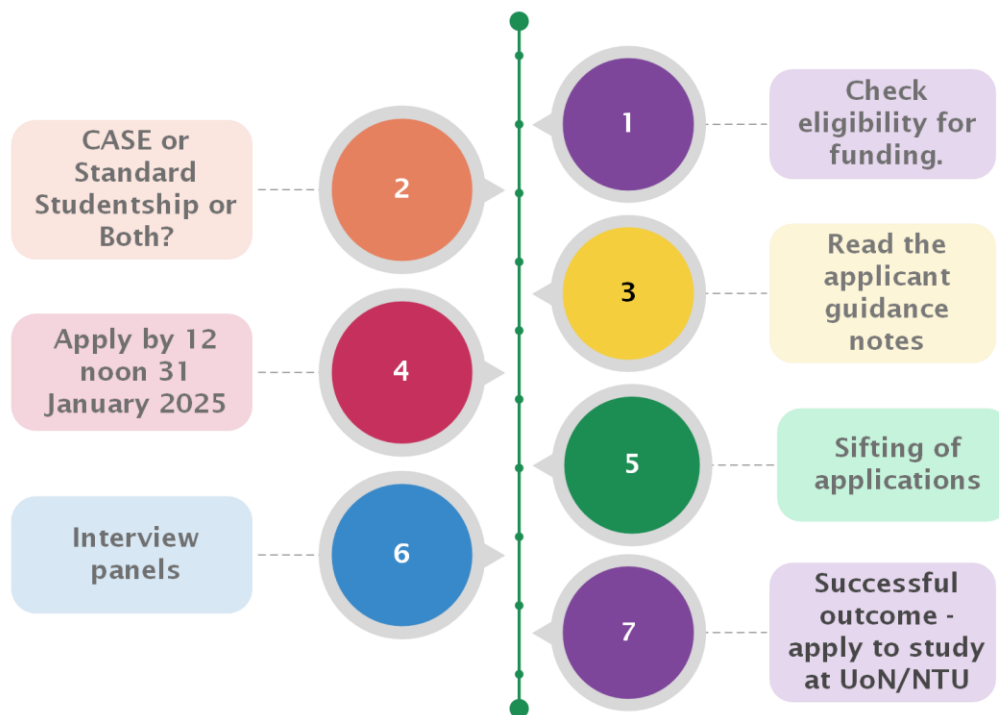
This is an in-person PhD programme and all students are expected to attend in person from the start of the programme either at University of Nottingham or Nottingham Trent University, depending on where your project is based. This is to reduce the risk of isolation and ensure you benefit from the full support, mentoring, training and access to facilities available.

The Application process

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The Nottingham BBSRC DTP offers two different types of studentship:
1. Standard DTP project

2. CASE studentship offers the opportunity to work in partnership with a non-academic/ industry partner with the benfit of a partner supervisor as part of the supervisory team.

1 — Check eligibility for funding.

2 — CASE or Standard Studentship or Both?

3 — Read the applicant guidance notes

4 — Apply by 12 noon 31 January 2025

5 — Sifting of applications

6 — Interview panels

7 — Successful outcome - apply to study at UoN/NTU

Identify a cluster your research interests are most aligned with as you will only be able to apply to **one** cluster.

1. Check your eligibility.
2. Apply for a studentship with the Nottingham BBSRC DLA, submitting transcripts (certified, in English only). If the transcripts are not included, not in English/not certified translation into English, they cannot be accepted, and your application will not be progressed.
3. You may only submit **one** application.
4. Once the deadline has passed, all eligible applications will be considered by a panel of academics who will select candidates to attend both an academic interview and a transferable skills interview.

5. Invitations to interview will be sent out at the end of February and interviews will be held week commencing 10 March.
6. Candidates invited to interview will receive a list of questions that will be asked during the interview and an academic paper to discuss.
7. During the academic interview, you will be asked to prepare a presentation on your previous research experience as part of your interview with an academic panel.
8. You will be told when you can expect to hear the outcome at your interview.
9. Candidates interested in the CASE programme will also have a CASE interview with the project supervisory team as well as following the standard DTP interview process above.

Please note: All communications, such as invitations to interview and final offers, are sent via email so please ensure you have entered your email address correctly.

Eligibility
- Open to Home & International students (maximum of 30% of cohort can be international).
- As a minimum, applicants should hold or be predicted to achieve the following UK qualifications or their equivalent:
  - 1st Class or 2:1 undergraduate degree in a relevant area of science or technology, or equivalent qualifications gained outside the UK
  - 2:2 undergraduate degree or lower, with:
    - a Masters' degree in a relevant area of science or technology or equivalent qualifications gained outside the UK.
    - three or more years of full-time work experience that is relevant to your undergraduate degree, or to the PhD projects you are applying for
- You may still be eligible to apply if you were not able to complete your degree or achieved unexpectedly low degree results due to extenuating circumstances.
- If your degree is not from the UK, please contact the team to verify equivalences.
- If English isn't your first language, you will also need to meet the relevant English language requirements. An IELTS score of 6.5 (no less than 6.0 in any element) is required, though we also accept alternative qualifications. If you require additional support to develop your language skills, you may be able to attend a pre-sessional course at the Centre for English Language Education.
- Students cannot be in receipt of a stipend and be employed. UKRI terms and conditions also state students may undertake teaching or demonstrating work when this is compatible with their training and if this is approved by their supervisors. The total time spent (including preparation and marking) should not interfere with the progress of the doctorate. The amount of time is at your and supervisor discretion, but it is recommended that this is no more than **six** hours in any week.
- You can only apply to ONE cluster (and CASE projects in that cluster)
- The application form and transcripts (certified and in English) must be submitted by the deadline of **12 noon UK time on Friday 31 January 2025**.

Qualifications

- You will be asked to provide details about your academic qualifications. Please **DO NOT** include details of your degree-awarding institution in your answers or supervisors involved.
- If you are an international applicant, your qualifications will be assessed by the Admissions Team for equivalences to ensure that your qualifications meet those stated in the eligibility criteria.
- If you are currently studying and not yet completed your degree (UG or Masters), please ensure it is clear that the outcome is pending, and your offer will be conditional on the grade awarded.
- You will need to ensure that academic transcripts are submitted by the deadline of **12 noon UK time on Friday 31 January 2025**. These should be certified as English if translated. Late or untranslated transcripts will not be accepted, and your application will be ineligible.
- Academic Transcripts in English **must** be included with your application as the application will not be processed without them. If you have completed your degree, please upload a copy of your official final transcript in English, that confirms the date of the award. If you have not yet completed your degree, please upload a copy of your current transcript of marks.
- Each transcript should be named as follows: [candidate surname, candidate name – [document]]. For example: Jones, William – BSc transcript.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Nottingham BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership recognises and prioritises its responsibility to operate in a way which creates equality of opportunity for all our applicants and students, supporting the recruitment of a diverse student cohort and running an inclusive recruitment programme. We are also required to provide EDI data to BBSRC as part of our reporting.

To support this:

- we offer an applicant mentoring scheme, AMPlify, to support applicants who have Home fees status and identify as coming from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- we offer a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for applicants from black and black mixed backgrounds.
- we ensure the anonymisation of name, gender, age and previous institution of study in application assessments.
- we focus on motivation and potential in our application assessment criteria.
- we advertise PhD opportunities as widely as possible, aiming to eliminate jargon from our advertising and showcase diverse role models in our imagery.
- we ensure all interview panellists have undertaken unconscious bias training.
- we include equality, diversity and inclusion focussed training in our programme, for students and supervisors.

- we monitor our EDI data closely, including data on socio-economic background of candidates and caring responsibilities.
- we provide questions in advance of interviews for all applicants.
- As a result of the above, it is essential that you do **not** include any identifiable characteristics such as names, age, gender, location, academia, publications in your application.

The Application Form:

Section 1: Personal Details
- This section asks for details which will be used **only** for the purpose of equal opportunities monitoring and **will not** be seen by reviewers during the recruitment process. The information will be separate from the application and seen only by the DTP team when processing the application.
- If you would prefer not to answer some/any of the equality, diversity and inclusion questions, there is an option "prefer not to say". All data collected will be shared with BBSRC anonymously.

Section 2: Cluster Choice
Please ensure you do **not** include any personally identifiable data in your responses to any of the questions such as places of study or work, countries, names, etc. Responses should focus only on your experiences, qualifications or skills as requested.
- You are only permitted to apply to **one** of the research clusters:
  - Heat resilient agriculture (Sustainable Agriculture & Food);
  - Biomaterials for tissue engineering & drug delivery (Bioscience for Human Health);
  - Technologies for sustainable protein synthesis (Biotechnology for Sustainable Growth)
- You can apply to **both** the standard programme and CASE programme.

Section 3: Skills & Experience

Each question has a word limit clearly stated.
Please ensure that you do NOT include any identifying characteristics in your answers such as references to locations, institutions, organisations, people such as supervisors, your age, etc. This is particularly key in question 44 when describing significant research outcomes.

Section 4: Additional Questions

These questions are not shared with reviewers.

Section 5: Equal Opportunities

All details shared with BBSRC are anonymous. This section is also optional.

References

If you are successful and invited to interview, your referee will be sent a request to complete the BBSRC DTP reference form. We would recommend ensuring your referees are aware that you have nominated them to supply a reference and the timeframe to submit.

Useful Information

- There will be a virtual Open Day held on Wednesday 15 January and we strongly encourage you to attend.
- Please follow all the guidance carefully as if you omit any of the information requested or do not follow the instructions accurately, it will affect the assessment of your application.