

Black Leaders in Cancer PhD Scholarship Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

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ELIGIBILITY

Why is the Black Leaders in Cancer PhD Scholarship programme only aimed at students from Black backgrounds?

Data consistently show that Black researchers are one of the most underrepresented groups in Higher Education, especially in Science departments across universities in the UK. This effect intensifies across the academic pipeline: we see a dramatic fall in numbers of people from Black backgrounds from undergraduate level to professorial level, where only 0.5% of professors in Science, Technology and Engineering subjects in the UK are from Black backgrounds¹.

This pattern is also reflected in our own diversity data of researchers that apply and receive our funding. Our [2023 Diversity Data in our Research Funding Report](#) shows that less than 1% of all applications received were from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British researchers (lower than the Biosciences academic staff population for this group at 2%).

Therefore, we have developed this programme to bring in excellence that may otherwise be lost to science, to drive change along the academic pipeline and to empower the next generation of Black Leaders in cancer. We also know from [listening to our own research community](#) and other expert organisations, such as Leading Routes, that persistent racial inequalities have disadvantaged people from Black backgrounds, including in academia, and that positive action initiatives, such as this one, are essential to catalyse forward the change that is needed.

Will other underrepresented groups be eligible for this or similar schemes in the future?

We hope to expand this programme over time, potentially to other underrepresented groups.

I am a clinical trainee, am I eligible to apply?

Currently our programme is only open to non-clinical PhD candidates.

I am an existing PhD student, am I eligible to apply?

These scholarships are intended to support students through the full duration of their PhD, rather than partway through existing training.

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

You don't have to be a UK national to apply, however we only support fees at our set home/UK fees rate outlined in our [Costs Guidance](#). Any shortfall between our standard fee allowance and the international fee rate must be covered by another source of funding by the institution and cannot be covered by the student themselves. Note that from 1 Jan 2021, students paying international fees also includes EU and EEA nationals.

¹ <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-report-2020>

Can I apply for part-funding of a PhD?

Across all our studentships, CRUK only offers fully funded studentships and does not fund partial studentships.

Where will this programme be based out of?

From the 2024 application round onwards, all seven CRUK Centre locations will offer two studentships per year.

What additional support will I receive on the scholarship programme?

The Black Leaders in Cancer PhD Scholarship programme has support, mentoring and career development embedded at every stage.

Programme participants will be able to access:

1. Fully funded 4-year PhD studentship - including stipend and research costs (see here for our [cost guidance](#))
2. Pastoral support – delivered by a mentor trained by our partner the Windsor Fellowship
3. Leadership programme – a series of seminar workshops focussed on developing key skills and competencies such as resilience, competencies, presentations, team working, goal setting and navigating the workplace
4. Black in Cancer career development workshops – a series of seminars focused on developing your career as a researcher in the cancer field
5. Networking opportunities
6. Academic mentorship – delivered by an academic mentor within your host Centre

Participants will also have access to a large variety of training and support resources provided as part of our doctoral training programmes; these include core skills training, career development support and networking events.

Support will also be provided to all applicants throughout the application process (including application guidelines and comprehensive support to applicants to put together a competitive application).

How can I find out more about whether a PhD and a career in academic research is right for me?

We will be running two Insight Sessions in October 2024. These will be interactive webinars where you can find out about what it is like to be a PhD student, get tips and advice about how to successfully apply to a PhD programme, and ask questions about careers in academic research. You will be able to find out more details regarding the date, times and how to register for the insight sessions on our [website](#).

BACKGROUND

Why has Cancer Research UK developed this programme?

Diversity is integral to excellence. A diverse and inclusive research community ensures equality and equity for all and will help beat cancer sooner. We are committed to creating equal, diverse and inclusive research environments that enable all researchers to realise their full potential to beat cancer.

As part of our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) in Research](#) action plan published in 2021, we are committed to working with our training centres to understand and implement initiatives to increase diversity of students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds.

This programme builds on the various initiatives we are supporting to improve diversity in our research careers pipeline. We've partnered with [In2scienceUK](#) and [Black in Cancer](#) to mentor school children and undergraduates from low socio-economic backgrounds and Black backgrounds to offer opportunities to build a career in cancer research.

We hope this programme will create an immediate and tangible impact on the diversity of our researcher community. In tandem, we are working with our Centres and Institutes to embed EDI principles throughout the PhD recruitment process and to ensure positive and inclusive research environments across our network.

Who has Cancer Research UK consulted in developing this programme?

This programme was developed in close consultation with our research community including our expert partner organisations [Black in Cancer](#) and [Windsor Fellowship](#) who helped with the design of this scheme.

Throughout the development we engaged with various other organisations such as our Centres and Institutes and other research funders. We also sought feedback from research organisations with experience of establishing positive action schemes including the Sanger Excellence Fellowship programme at the Wellcome Sanger Institute and other organisations that have extensive experience of the barriers faced by underrepresented students accessing STEM careers such as In2ScienceUK.

Our internal Race Equality and Equity staff network also provided valuable insights to shape our plans.

What else is Cancer Research UK doing to promote diversity across the cancer research career pipeline?

We have prioritised putting new career support initiatives in place to diversify our research careers pipeline in partnership with charitable organisations and grassroots networks. These include:

- PhD recruitment principles – we have created a set of overarching principles intended to be used as guidelines to support our funded Institutes and Centres to work towards equality, diversity and inclusion in their PhD recruitment practices
- [Black in Cancer Mentorship Programme](#) – a programme where Black undergraduate students with an interest in cancer research are matched with a mentor to help support them and provide



career-focused advice and have the opportunity to complete an eight-week summer placement in a cancer research lab

- [Health Data Science Black Internship Programme](#) – a programme providing early career Black data scientists with an eight week paid internship across various sectors to provide the experience they need to kick-start their STEM careers
- [In2scienceUK](#) / [In2researchUK](#) programmes – programmes where school children and undergraduate students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds are provided with training, mentorship sessions run by researchers, as well as the opportunity to undertake an eight-week summer research placement
- [Stellar HE](#) – a strategic executive development programme for Diverse Leaders designed specifically to develop and implement leadership strategies that reflect the unique challenges and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic academic and professional staff across Higher Education

For a full list of what we're doing to meet our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in research, please visit our [EDI in research](#) webpage.