

Alzheimer's Society Doctoral Training Centres

Introduction

Scheme Details

In line with Alzheimer's Society's strategy and research mission to support the next generation of dementia research leaders we are changing the way that we support doctoral students.

Our Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs) will support multi-institution centres of excellence in research training. Each centre will have funding for 5 cohorts with a mid-term review in year 3 to assess progress against objectives. The DTC **must be multi-institutional across two or more institutions**, and we encourage best with best collaboration across as many institutions as appropriate.

The longer grant will allow the development of training programmes and for cohorts to truly embed and learn from each other with a critical mass of students and supervisors. The applicant team should demonstrate how the students will benefit from the cohort approach both within cohort years and across cohort years as well as from interactions with all supervisors and the DTC training programme.

Alzheimer's Society will fund 4 students per year at each DTC to conduct a 4-year PhD with a requirement that the DTC match this with a minimum of 1 studentship per year. This would give each DTC a cohort of at least 5 students per year with a total of at least 25 students over the 5 years.

We expect DTCs to seek significant leverage and be co-developed with relevant non-academic stakeholders and users of research including people affected by dementia.

Alzheimer's Society expects to commit up to £9 million to support two or three DTCs.

Timeline:

Applications open: 22nd May 2023
Deadline for Intention to Submit: 14th July 2023
Applications made by: 15th September 2023
Decisions communicated by: March 2024
Cohort year to begin: September 2024-September 2025

Eligibility to apply

Doctoral Training Centres and all studentships within them must be based at UK universities, NHS sites or other recognised higher research institutions.

Applications must involve multi-institutional teams. These multi-institutional teams should not be within the same university or related NHS sites.

Applications should be opened and completed by one Lead Applicant (primary point of contact) and supported by co-applicants from the other institutions. All institutions involved

must be in the UK and the Lead Applicant must have a contract within their institution which covers the duration of the award.

Each institution involved should highlight a lead who is responsible for the coordination of the students within their institution and work together on the project team across institutions.

Multiple Doctoral Training Centre grant applications per institute are allowed, although it is strongly recommended that there is clear difference in the team, theme and training experience. Applicant teams within institutions must be unique for each DTC submission. An individual should not be named as a proposed supervisor to more than one application.

In assembling the centre team, applicants must consider what is most beneficial to deliver the centre vision, research environment, and training provision being proposed.

Collaborations with non-academic project partners are expected where appropriate for the focus of the centre.

Scope of Doctoral Training Centre Grants

As with all Alzheimer's Society funding, applications must seek to increase knowledge in the cause, cure and care of any form of dementia.

Additionally, people affected by dementia have told us that the following six transition points, which often lead to crisis, have the biggest impact on them right now. Research will ensure that Alzheimer's Society will continue to play a key role for people affected by dementia by either reducing the impact of or eliminating moments of crisis. Applicants should consider how their project might address the following areas:

1. Getting a diagnosis
2. Adjusting to living with dementia
3. Needing greater support with care
4. Hospitalisation
5. Needing an alternative home
6. End of life

Each Doctoral Training Centre grant should have programmatic themes and studentships should be linked to a common aim or utilise similar techniques or resources. We are seeking cohesive programmes where there is clear opportunity for students to interact with each other.

Within the case for support, we ask you to provide an overview of the theme about which the multiple studentships are linked. We also request greater detail of one proposed studentship (2 of your 8 pages) that will be offered. For the other four studentships in the first cohort the case for support should outline research questions that will be addressed as well as an abstract of the proposed work and how it addresses the need set out within the theme.

Before commencing, each studentship will need to be confirmed and approved by Alzheimer's Society research staff to ensure it is within the agreed funding remit of the Society and theme of the Doctoral Training Centre. This process will remain for each subsequent cohort year.

Supervision of studentships

In the remit of this scheme to support capacity building, we welcome and encourage a mixture of named supervisors at different stages in their careers and with ranging level of supervision experience. The grant should be led by a principal applicant, whose contract of employment extends beyond the end date of the centre, and include named co-applicants as supervisors.

As part of their submission, institutions should include information on their approach to:

- a) training for staff who supervise students funded from the Doctoral Training Centre Grant
- b) how they will recognise and support the role of postdoctoral researchers in supporting these students

We expect to see aspects of the studentships, including training and personal development plans, co-developed with the students once in place.

Funding available and number of studentships

Applicants may apply for up to £3.125 million to support 20 PhD studentships over 5 years. This is modelled on our previous rate of up to £155,000 per studentship. Institutions must leverage at least one additional student per year, bringing the total number of studentships to 25.

Institutions should only charge PhD fees at the home rate for doctoral-level students. College fees may not be sought.

In addition, the Doctoral Training Centre grant will allow the option for one of the PhDs per year to be taken up by a clinician or allied health professional as a Clinical Training Fellow. If applicants wish to apply for this option, then up to £160,000 may be requested and the value matched by the host institution. The Clinical Training Fellowship can be the leveraged additional student resulting in 4 students per cohort for 5 years, bringing the total amount of students to 20.

Applications can include a further £50,000 (£10k per cohort annum) of requested funding to enable engagement of the DTC with the wider environment. This might be used to raise general awareness or engagement of dementia research amongst relevant study disciplines and the communities local to the institutions. We expect to see plans for engagement with people affected by dementia.

The £50,000 funding can be used flexibly as justified by the applicant. Examples might include, but are not limited to:

- Funding 'open day' type events
- Engaging with local schools, care homes, day centres etc.
- Events targeted at medical students highlighting possibilities in dementia research
- Supporting student summer bursary placements to allow undergraduate students to undertake a summer project linked to the theme of the Doctoral Training Centre

Therefore, the maximum value of award would be:

£3,150,000 (20 x up to £155k studentships + £50k institute engagement)

or

£3,175,000 (15 x up to £155k studentships + 5 x £160k studentships + £50k institute engagement) if the bid includes one Clinical Training Fellowship per year.

See costing breakdown below for more information.

Applications can request funding for more than four studentships per year as long as the overall request does not exceed £3.15m or £3.175m if including a Clinical Training Fellowship. This is in response to enquiries from some potential applicants who have posed the possibility of leveraging support from elsewhere.

Finances

Alzheimer's Society offers a competitive tax-free 4-year stipend (3-year salary for Clinical Fellows), as well as £1,000 per year per studentship to support career development. An intended feature of the Alzheimer's Society Doctoral Training Centre grants is that the £10,000 funding per year per studentship allocated for materials and consumables might be utilized flexibly to support the studentship. For instance, we welcome applications that seek to increase the training or interdisciplinary nature of the studentship.

Example studentship costs + fees UK rate (non-London based studentships)

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Total |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Stipend (fixed) | £18,000 | £19,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 | £77,000 |
| Consumables (fixed) | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £40,000 |
| Career development (fixed) | £1,000 | £1,000 | £1,000 | £1,000 | £4,000 |

Example studentship costs with London weighting + fees UK rate

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | (Year 4) | Total |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Stipend (fixed) | £20,000 | £21,000 | £22,000 | £22,000 | £85,000 |
| Consumables (fixed) | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £40,000 |
| Career development (fixed) | £1,000 | £1,000 | £1,000 | £1,000 | £4,000 |

*Example studentship costs for a clinical fellow + fees UK rate **

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Total |
|--|---|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Salary (approx.) <i>To be matched by institutions</i> | ~£35,000 | ~£35,000 | ~£35,000 | ~£105,00 |
| Consumables (fixed) | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £30,000 |
| Career development (fixed) | £1,000 | £1,000 | £1,000 | £3,000 |
| TOTAL | £160,000 max & matched funding from host institution | | | |

*Three-year (rather than four-year) clinical fellowship was highlighted by the clinical community as the most appropriate length.

Fees: Additional costs include university PhD fees at UK rate

Materials & consumables: Budget can be used at any point throughout the studentship as long as the total does not exceed £40,000.

Career development: Can be used on training, conference attendance, travel and dissemination activities. Costs can be used at any point throughout the studentship and is not restricted to £1,000 per year but should not exceed £4,000 at the end of the four years.

Partnership funding and co-funding of research

Although not a requirement, we encourage applications that include financial or other commitments of support from other potential partners or industry organisations. This might include additional studentships, co-funding of studentships or funding of materials and resources from other funds.

Applications should include letters of intent from other partners. We recognise that other funders may have their own review or selection processes and shall seek to take a facilitative approach to this. Please contact Alzheimer's Society Research team in confidence if you would like to discuss further.

Commencement of award

The first cohort of students within the Doctoral Training Centre grants should start between 1 September 2024 and 1 September 2025.

Application Processes

Applications for Doctoral Training Centre grants should be submitted electronically via <https://grants.alzheimers.org.uk>

We will assess your application using the following process.

Peer review

We will invite relevant academics and people affected by dementia to review your application independently, against the specified criteria for this grant.

Shortlisting

Depending on the number of applications we receive, a triage process will be run to shortlist the highest-quality applications to take forward to interview.

Response to Peer review

If a proposal meets the quality threshold, the applicant team is given the opportunity to respond to the peer and lay reviewers' comments.

Advisory Board

We will invite experts to join an advisory board which will collectively review your application against the criteria and rank it alongside other applications. Shortlisted applicant teams will be interviewed by the advisory board before funding recommendations are made.

Funding criteria:

| Assessment | Peer Review | Lay Review | DTC Advisory Board |
|---|-------------|------------|--------------------|
| Need of the proposed research or capacity building within dementia research | X | X | X |
| Excellence of proposed research | X | | X |
| Excellence of training environments and proposed training programme | X | X | X |
| Perceived priority for people affected by dementia | | X | X |
| Track record of applicant team | X | | X |
| Inclusion of patient and public involvement | | X | X |
| Value for money of the application | | | X |

Webinars

Alzheimer's Society will hold two webinars to support this funding opportunity. Attendees are required to register for one of the two options which are:

- 15th of June 2023
- 15th of August 2023

Doctoral Training Centre – Applicant guidance & cases for support

Intention to submit

If you are planning to submit you must email grantenquiries@alzheimers.org.uk including a proposal title, theme, list of investigators and institutions to be included in the submission. This will not be assessed but will allow us to manage the assessment process.

You must submit your intent to submit by 14 July 2023, if you do not tell us about your intention to submit an application by this date you will not be eligible to submit a full proposal.

Full Proposal

As part of your Doctoral Training Centre application, you will be asked to submit four attachments to the body of your application:

To be included:

1. Scientific case for support: 10-page document outlining the vision, research, and training programme
2. Lay case for support: 5-page document describing the vision, research and training programme in lay terms
3. Partner letters of support detailing support that will be offered to the centre
4. Host letter of support confirming support from the host organizations including studentships to be leveraged (if institutions are providing the additional funded student)

Guidance for what to include in each of these documents is detailed below.

1. Scientific case for support

Please attach a 'case for support' document of up to ten pages (excluding references) in Arial no smaller than 11pt with a minimum 2cm margin. We recommend you titling this attachment 'Scientific case for support: [project title]' and include page numbers on your document.

Suggested headings and points to consider:

- **Theme of the Centre and Vision, Leadership, Management, and Governance**
 - Provide an overview of the vision and research theme of the programme, the need for the doctoral researchers that the programme will produce and the approach that will be taken
 - Provide an overview of the management and governance structure
 - Describe how projects will be assigned and the process for recruitment
- **Outline the potential supervisors and their experience**
 - We would like to see involvement from early career researchers as well as established researchers as potential supervisors and expect to see suitable support offered to them where needed
- **Quality of the team, research environment and training approach**
 - Experience and research excellence of the supervision team
 - Evidence of the commitment from the institutions to doctoral training and to this DTC
 - Evidence of the team's experience of providing a high-quality research environment for supporting doctoral-level research
 - Demonstration of an existing critical mass of high-quality training activity
 - Describe the support available to staff who supervise the students in this centre
 - Describe how you will recognise and support the role of postdoctoral researchers in supporting these students
 - Describe the DTC training programme and how this will be delivered
 - Describe how the cohort will be embedded, for example colocation, training and dissemination events, induction etc.

- **Research Culture and Diversity**
 - Give details of how diversity and inclusion will be embedded within the centre
 - Give details of recruitment practices that will enable a diverse cohort
- **Engagement, dissemination, and delivery**
 - Describe how the DTC grant will engage with people affected by dementia and wider research and local community
 - Describe how the results from the DTC programme will be disseminated
 - How might this programme of research be implemented or developed after completion of the grant
- **Outline of the PhD studentship projects**
 - Provide a **two-page** (included in 10-page total) plan for **one** of the proposed projects including details of the research question and background, aims, experimental design/methods, impact of the research for people affected by dementia and specific training plan outline
 - Outline the remaining four proposed projects in the first cohort including the research questions that will be addressed, an abstract of each proposed project and how it addresses the need set out within the theme

Two of the ten-page case for support should be allocated to discussing one of the five projects in detail. The remaining eight pages can be structured as best fits the information required.

References are not included in the ten-page limit however all other figures (eg. Figures, images, data or publications) should be included within the page limit and **cannot** be attached separately. You must attach a GANTT chart/project plan to your application as an additional attachment.

2. Lay application

Please attach a summary of your application, which is written in words that people without a scientific background can understand totalling no more than 5 pages in Ariel size 12. We recommend that your summary includes the following:

- **The theme of the proposed centre**
 - Provide a brief background to what is already known in your chosen theme and how it complements national and international research in its area(s)
 - Include an overview of the theme of the programme
 - Describe the need for the doctoral researchers that the programme will produce
- **Outline of the PhD studentship projects**
 - Describe how the individual studentships link into a common theme and how the students may interact with each other
 - Outline the five proposed studentship projects for the first cohort year including the research questions that will be addressed, an abstract of each proposed project including methodology and how it addresses the need set out within the theme in lay terms

- **Benefits to people affected by dementia**
 - Describe the specific ways in which your programme aims to benefit the lives of people affected by dementia today or in the future
- **Quality of the team, research environment and training approach**
 - Quality and research excellence of the supervision team
 - Evidence of the team's experience of providing a high-quality research environment for supporting doctoral-level research
 - Demonstration of an existing critical mass of high-quality training activity and support to the students
- **Engagement, dissemination and delivery**
 - Describe how the centre will engage with the wider community, both research and non-research
 - Describe how the results from the programme will be disseminated to audiences, including people affected by dementia and train the students to disseminate research to a variety of audiences
 - Indicate plans that you have to involve people affected by dementia in your DTC programme and individual studentship projects
 - Describe how this programme of research (or outcomes of individual projects) might be implemented or developed after completion of the grant
- **Glossary**
 - Include a glossary to explain technical terms

3. Letters of support

- Should be on headed paper dated within the last 6 months
- Should give details of support provided this can be in kind

4. Host Institution letters of support

- We expect a significant commitment from the host organisations and this should be detailed in the host letter of support including the commitment to fund at least one studentship per year of the centre

Frequently asked questions

When will the application open?

The application form is open on 22nd of May and is available at <https://grants.alzheimers.org.uk>

When is the submission deadline?

The deadline for submitting an application is 15th of September. However, the deadline for intentions to submit is 14th of July. Teams who do not provide this information **will not** be eligible to submit their full application.

Can more than one institute apply?

DTC grants **must** be multi-institutional with two or more institutions included on an application. They must demonstrate the linking of studentships, support for career progression, mentorship and generic research training and skills across and within each PhD studentship. Applicant teams who apply from a singular institution or are from an institute and connected NHS site will be rejected at validation.

Why are bids limited to four Alzheimer's Society funded PhD studentships per cohort year?

The offer of an Alzheimer's Society DTC grant is proportional to our overall research budget, and our desire to make multiple awards. Applications can request funding for more than four studentships as long as the overall request does not exceed £3.15 million or £3.75 million if including a Clinical Training Fellowship. This is in response to enquiries from some potential applicants who have enquired about the possibility of leveraging support from elsewhere.

Will further funding be available to successful DTCs?

The possibility of continuing the scheme with further awards and the long-term establishment of DTCs is not decided at this point, and we will evaluate the scheme after awards have been made. We are committed to supporting capacity building with dementia research so continued support is within the strategic interest of the Society.

How many applicants should there be on the application form?

We expect the application to demonstrate a 'core' of expertise and experience that are capable of supporting the application. The application should have an identified lead (principal investigator) that is the point of contact during the application process. Co-applicants should likely be the identified first supervisors of the project or demonstrate multidisciplinary aspects of the application. It is expected that all studentships will have a first and second supervisor. The second supervisor can be named in the application form without being required to be a co-applicant if preferred. We are interested in applications that seek to build the experience of early career researchers who have not supervised many/any PhD students before (paired with a more experienced supervisor). In addition, if proposed to be included, the supervision team should demonstrate the capacity to supervise a Clinical Training Fellowship.

How themed do the DTC grants need to be?

We are not wishing to be prescriptive here to allow applications to be creative. We ask that themes allow for studentships to share common elements, for instance themes, techniques, resources, or that take different approaches to a common question. Multidisciplinary bids are encouraged, and the multidisciplinary nature of the projects described in the cases for support.

Does my bid need to address the priorities (or transition points) outlined by the Society?

The six transition points represent consensus priorities for people affected by dementia where significant improvements can be made to the dementia journey. While bids aiming to address these transition points are welcomed, Alzheimer's Society will fund the highest-quality proposals that demonstrate a real commitment to providing excellent training and support to develop the next generation of dementia research leaders.

How many of the studentships will I have to describe in detail?

The application form requires you to provide an overview of the theme about which the studentships are linked. You should provide the detail of one application in full (2 pages) that will be offered. For the other studentships we expect to see the likely research question that will be addressed as well as an abstract of the proposed value of the work. Before commencing, each studentship should be developed with the identified students and will

need to be confirmed and approved by Alzheimer's Society office staff to ensure it is within the agreed funding remit of the Society and theme of the DTC.

How many DTC awards are you seeking to make?

Our ambition is to make around three awards.

What level of additional funding are you seeking from institutes or other sources?

Doctoral Training Centre applications are expected to have leveraged at least one studentship per year with costs in line with Society funding (five studentships in total). Any additional funding would demonstrate institute or industry commitment and value for money to the programme. Outside of the five leveraged studentships, we are not prescriptive to how additional funding might be structured. The application should include a letter outlining the additional support which is offered. The annual financials of the award to each university will be finalised after the commitment to support an application has been made.

Do I need to include patient involvement?

Alzheimer's Society review criteria includes assessment of patient and public involvement plans. We strongly advise all applications include approaches to patient and public involvement in their project plan. We have guidance on our website for how teams can include the patient voice in research. Additional resources, produced by UKRI, NIHR and Wellcome Trust, can be found online. We will be running our Application Development programme with our Research Network Volunteers in advance of application submission.

For more information visit our website at

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/research/researchers/grant-application-development>

All research funded by Alzheimer's Society has a high level of patient involvement provided by the charity. Each Doctoral Training Centre will have lay members assigned from the Research Network, which will be involved in the 'monitoring' of the work.

Will part-time studentships be accepted?

Alzheimer's Society supports researchers and their research teams to work flexibly to meet personal circumstances and are happy to discuss part-time PhD studentship options.

We encourage DTCs with Clinical Training Fellows to maintain and develop their professional practice-based skills and continue clinical practice on a part-time basis throughout the grant.

If successful at awarding, DTC leads will need to have a plan put in place to ensure that part-time students remain a vital part of the cohort.

Please contact the research team for further enquiries at grantenquiries@alzheimers.org.uk