

Opportunity to Host PhD Studentships in Linked Administrative Data Research



BACKGROUND

1. ESRC is committed to delivering excellence in postgraduate training and supporting the development of highly capable and innovative researchers for a wide range of careers both within and beyond academia.
2. Administrative Data Research UK ([ADR UK](#)) is an ESRC investment which plays an important role in transforming the way researchers access the UK's wealth of public sector data. By joining up the abundance of administrative data already created by government and public bodies across the UK and making it available for researchers in a safe and secure way, we are enabling vital research that has the potential to lead to better informed policy decisions and more effective public services.
3. Over the past four years, ADR UK has made significant advances in making de-identified administrative data easier for researchers to access securely, and there is now an impressive collection of new flagship datasets available through our partnership's trusted research environments across the UK. ADR UK is developing further resources including explainer videos, training courses, synthetic data which can be used to develop and test code, and communities of practice in which researchers can share ideas, questions, challenges, and successes.
4. ADR UK is offering new funding for [ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships \(DTPs\)](#) to host PhD studentships focused on quantitative research using linked administrative data. Funding will be available for up to 20 PhD studentships located anywhere in the UK, starting in October 2023.
5. The [ESRC's review of the PhD in the social sciences](#) highlighted the continuing need for us to develop capacity in data skills and advanced quantitative methods (AQM) training. As confirmed in the current call for [DTPs](#), for studentships starting from October 2024, ESRC will be steering a proportion of studentships strategically to reward strength in our priority areas including data skills and advanced quantitative methods, including the use of administrative data. The studentships available as part of this opportunity are aimed at supporting DTPs to develop their capacity for using linked administrative data ahead of the recommissioning process. Indeed, DTPs that use their funding for additional PhD studentships using administrative data will be welcome to make use of the additional support (such as training courses, synthetic data, access to user groups and experts) provided by ADR UK as part of its wider [Training and Capacity Building Strategy](#).

OPPORTUNITY

6. DTPs are invited to apply for funding to host up to four supervisor-led PhD studentships each, starting in October 2023. There are 20 studentships available in total, and the cohort of supervisors and the students selected will join a pilot programme to develop exemplar case studies to promote wider use of administrative data for research.
7. Administrative data covers a wide range of topics and therefore applications will be considered from both within and beyond the social sciences. However, applicants are encouraged to consider how the [ADR UK mission](#) and flagship datasets (see accompanying brochure) can steer the research areas that PhDs are based around.

8. Supervisors should also consider their strengths and weaknesses regarding data analysis and interpretation. The flagship datasets include a variety of data 'states'. For example, some datasets are well-curated and have already been used for early research, meaning that some code could be available to build on. Other datasets are more 'raw' and research using these will include improving the data and learning its idiosyncrasies. Please carefully consider the information provided in the accompanying brochure before deciding what kind of research you are prepared and able to support and provide details about how you can support students depending on which datasets you expect to access through this opportunity.

THE STUDENTSHIPS

9. 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.
10. We recognise that interdisciplinary studentships crossing traditional research boundaries involve additional training and that there can be added complexity in finalising projects. The actual length of studentships will depend on the structures available on the pathway and on the student's prior training. Funding will be provided on the basis of the notional cost of a studentship.
11. Funded students will be the responsibility of the ESRC DTP and subject to the same Terms and Conditions as students funded directly by ESRC. These students must graduate with the same well-rounded skill set as all other ESRC-funded postgraduate students. This must include core, advanced and non-academic training. Applications must demonstrate how this will be achieved.
12. Additional training and capacity building resources will be available through ADR UK (see further details below).

THE COHORT

13. This cohort must begin in the 2023/24 academic year; i.e., all students in the cohort are expected to start at the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year.
14. ADR UK expects to be able to fully fund 20 studentships, but the DTP could co-fund the studentships through their existing allocation or other sources to increase the total number. Although co-funding is not necessary, it may be viewed as an indication of the commitment of the DTP/other institutions involved.
15. In line with ADR UK's focus on building networks of support and a sense of community within DTPs and across the DTP partnership, we wish to ensure that this cohort of students have the support they need to make the most of this opportunity.
16. ADR UK reporting and monitoring requirements for all successful applicants, include:
 - a. Check-in meeting with both the supervisor and student within the first six months of the studentship; and,
 - b. Quarterly reports providing a high-level narrative including summary of progress, and any actual or potential issues/risks.Any additional reporting requirements will be discussed and agreed with successful applicants upon starting the studentship.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ADR UK

17. ADR UK is providing a brochure showcasing a suite of flagship linked administrative datasets from across all four UK nations with information about the data, including the types of questions it could answer and the breadth of related relevant topics. Note that the brochure provides a snapshot, and that information relating to flagship datasets and other linked administrative data is frequently updated. Applicants are advised to regularly check the [ADR UK website](#).
18. Each ADR UK flagship dataset has accompanying metadata. Where necessary, ADR UK will support successful applicants in their applications for accessing the data through existing relationships with data owners and data processors.
19. ADR UK is further developing resources including explainer videos, training courses (including both generic skills and data-specific courses), synthetic data, and themed user groups/networks which will include current users of the data.
20. ADR UK also intends to work with successful applicants to identify relevant, appropriate, and fulfilling placement opportunities for the studentships.
21. ADR UK will host an applicant webinar on 20 September 2022, 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](#).

APPLICATIONS

22. Completed application packages must be sent by the DTP Director to hub@adruk.org by **4pm on 21 October 2022**. Applications must be coordinated and submitted by the DTP on behalf of its partnership. A completed application package consists of **two forms**:
 - I. Form A – for completion by the Director of the DTP coordinating the process (One Form A on behalf of the DTP); and,
 - II. Form B – for completion by supervisors looking to host PhD studentships (up to four forms; One Form B per each studentship opportunity).
23. 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.
24. Assessment will focus on:
 - 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.
 - Supervisory arrangements, including supervisor expertise and capacity to host studentship focused on quantitative research using linked administrative data.
 - The student recruitment process including the approach to attracting candidates from under-represented groups.
 - How studentships will contribute to the growing community of administrative data researchers.

Note: while supervisors are welcome to host studentships using any research-ready administrative dataset, those that plan to use one of ADR UK's flagship datasets will be prioritised.

25. ESRC is committed to the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Applicants that wish to participate in this Funding Opportunity but find that they are barred from doing so as a consequence of ED&I considerations, should contact us at hub@adruk.org.
26. If you have any further questions, please contact hub@adruk.org.