Opportunity Bristol

Financial support for applicants to research-related master’s programmes at the University of Bristol for 2020 entry, who are from one the following underrepresented ethnic backgrounds: Black, African, Black British, or Caribbean, or mixed backgrounds featuring one of these groups.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. **Do I have to declare my ethnic background in order to be eligible for this scheme?**

   Ethnicity is defined as special category data in UK legislation and so is a characteristic that is self-identified; applicants to the University are not obliged to provide information of this kind if they do not wish to do so.

   Nonetheless, the Government does require that this data is requested in order to monitor participation and diversity across the higher education sector. This evidence has clearly shown that there is a significant inequality between the ethnic diversity of Home postgraduate communities at UK universities and that of the national population — an issue that is particularly acute for students of Black, African, Black British, or Caribbean, or mixed backgrounds featuring one of these groups.

   This programme seeks to provide financial support for this group in the transition between undergraduate and postgraduate-research-level study, placing students in a better position to apply for doctoral training studentships through bridging their studies at the master’s level. The opportunity is, therefore, available to applicants who identify as being from one of the following under-represented ethnic groups at the University of Bristol: Black, African, Black British, or Caribbean, or mixed backgrounds featuring one of these groups.

2. **If I choose to provide personal information to the University in order to be considered for this scheme, do I then need to provide evidence of these circumstances with my application?**

   No. At this stage, it is sufficient that you advise us of your circumstances so that we may evaluate your application for this scheme.

3. **What financial support will I receive if I am successful in my application to this funding scheme?**

   Each bursary will cover, for the duration of the master’s programme:
   
   (i) full tuition fee (approx. £5-13k);
(ii) student stipend (at the level defined by UKRI – £15,285 in 2020/21); and a
(iii) contribution to research, travel and conference costs (£1k).

4. Should I apply first for my preferred master’s programme or to this bursary scheme?

Candidates who wish to apply for this opportunity should first complete the online application for entry to their preferred programme at:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/

noting their interest in the Opportunity Bristol programme within their application.

5. Is there a deadline for my application for these bursaries?

Candidates who wish to be considered for these awards must submit a complete, online application for one of the eligible master’s programmes before Monday 22 June 2020. Faculties will be meeting in early July 2020 to confirm the awards and we will notify all applicants as soon as their selections are known.

6. Which master’s-level programmes are eligible for support from this funding scheme?

All programmes that are listed as ‘Master of Research’ (MRes), ‘Master of Philosophy’ (MPhil), and ‘Master of Science by Research’ (MScR) are eligible, as are the following 'Master of Science' (MSc) programmes: Socio-Legal Studies; Accounting and Finance; Banking Regulation and Financial Stability; Human Geography: Society and Space.

General information on these types of awards is available at:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/prospective-research-students/types/.

7. If I am accepted on to my preferred master’s programme, how will my application for support through this scheme be evaluated?

Candidates must be:

(i) Applicants who have been accepted for entry to one of the following research-related, master’s-level programmes in the 2020/21 academic year: MRes, MPhil, and MScR programmes and the following MSc programmes: Socio-Legal Studies; Accounting and Finance; Banking Regulation and Financial Stability; Human Geography: Society and Space; and
(ii) Self-identified as being from one of the following under-represented ethnic groups at the University of Bristol: Black, African, Black British, or Caribbean, or mixed backgrounds featuring one of these groups.

Should further criteria be needed within the selection process, the following characteristics will be assessed where candidates may:

(i) have a family home postcode that is listed as a '1' or '2' in the POLAR4 column on the POLAR checking tool; and/or
(ii) be care-leavers or estranged students; and/or
(iii) mature students (aged 21 or over when they started their first undergraduate course); and/or
(iv) be currently studying at non-Russell Group universities; and/or
(v) have a disability. Please note that the term disability is very wide; further details of what may be considered a disability are in this link definition of disability.

Candidates will be ineligible if they have had previous, significant research experience.

8. When will I hear if I am to be awarded a bursary from this scheme?

Once we have confirmed an offer for you to study with us on one of the eligible master’s programmes (noted above), we will then consider your application for a bursary. Senior faculty staff will be meeting in early July 2020 to consider this and we will notify all applicants as soon as the selections are known.

9. Is there any guidance to help me complete the application for my chosen Masters programme?

Detailed guidance on the application process for all of our master’s programmes is available at:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/search/

Applicants are required to provide a personal statement as part of the admission process and should, particularly, provide details of their career interests and aspirations.

If you have other questions that are not covered by these FAQs, please contact Kevin Higgins at Kevin.Higgins@bristol.ac.uk, so that we can make contact with you.

10. What should I include in my personal statement to help my application for funding from this scheme?

This scheme provides support for applicants who are interested in a future career in a research area; perhaps within a University, business or other organisation. A
key aim is to place students in a better position to be able to apply for funded, doctoral training studentships through successful studies at the master’s level.

Therefore, in addition to the requirements noted in the admissions guidance for your chosen programme (http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/search/) your personal statement should include general details of your ideas and aspirations for your future career. It is also helpful to hear of previous interests and experiences in your life that may have led to these preferences and any emerging career goals.

If you have already submitted a personal statement as part of your online application for your master’s programme and would now like to enhance this for consideration within this scheme, please provide any further information as an additional document and send this directly, via email, to the school contact who is managing your application. Please also copy your email message and the file attachments to kevin.higgins@bristol.ac.uk.

11. Can I study for my master’s degree part-time and still be considered for support from this scheme?

Yes. Please ensure that your chosen programme is available by part-time study and mention this in your online application for admission. Information is available on our website (http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/search/).

12. I already have some funding confirmed for my studies (e.g. a student loan or another scholarships or bursary). If am accepted for admission to my chosen master’s programme, am I still eligible to apply for support from this scheme?

Yes.

However, if you are successful in being awarded an ‘Opportunity Bristol’ bursary and intend to also access funding from one or more of these other sources, please check that receipt of the ‘Opportunity Bristol’ award does not affect your eligibility to continue to receive those additional financial contributions.

13. Who should I contact if I have other questions about this funding opportunity?

If you have any questions, please email Kevin Higgins at Kevin.Higgins@bristol.ac.uk so that we may make contact with you.