

MSc-R Funding 2024-25



Centre for Ethics in Medicine

Population Health Sciences
Bristol Medical School
University of Bristol
Canynge Hall, 39 Whatley Road
Bristol, UK, BS8 2PS

✉ postgrad-ethics@bristol.ac.uk

Through an award from the Wellcome Trust, the Centre for Ethics in Medicine is pleased to announce that it has one studentship available on its MSc-R programme in 2024-25, commencing in Autumn 2024.

The MSc-R allows candidates to undertake a one-year research project in the field of bioethics/healthcare ethics. Applications are invited for proposals addressing the topic areas described below. This document outlines the current call and provides some guidance for applicants.

This document covers:

- Funding available
- Eligible candidates
- Application process
- Topic areas
- Guidance for writing your MSc-R research proposal

Funding Available

We have one funded MSc-R studentship available for 2024-25, to commence in Autumn 2024.

The successful applicant will be provided with:

- Funding to cover their MSc-R tuition fees (approx. £4,500 for one year, full-time study)
- A student stipend (£19,600)
- Research expenses e.g. to cover data collection, transcription and/or travel/conferences (up to £2,200 as needed)

Eligible Candidates

The most competitive candidates will be those with a first-class honours degree (or international equivalent) in a subject relevant to the proposed research. However, the minimum requirements to note are:

- Candidates will have at least an upper second-class honours degree (or international equivalent).
- Applicants may come from any pertinent discipline or relevant professional background, although projects must fall within the topic area (below) and include an ethical and/or legal dimension related to healthcare.
- If English is not your first language, please note that you will need to meet the English Language requirement of [Profile B](#). This will be scrutinised at the second stage of application by the admission team (see below).

International students are welcome to apply but should note that the funding available covers MSc-R tuition fees on a home student basis; international students will therefore need to self-fund the difference in the tuition fees that are payable.

Clinicians and other professionals are welcome to apply but should note that the stipend is set as per above.

Application Process

There is a two-stage application process, first to allocate the available funding and second to secure an offer to study.

Stage one is an application for the Wellcome Trust MSc-R funding. If successful, you will be issued with a letter stating our intention to provide you with funding if you are accepted onto the MSc-R programme. Stage two is an application (which will be supported by us) for a place on the MSc-R programme in the medical School at Bristol. Candidates must be successful at both stages in order to undertake the Wellcome Trust funded MSc-R.

Prior to Application

Candidates are welcome to make contact with colleagues in the Centre for Ethics in Medicine (postgrad-ethics@bristol.ac.uk) to check their eligibility to apply and/or the suitability of their proposed project. Please note that we will **not** be providing feedback on draft applications prior to or during the first stage of the process. However, at the conclusion of the first stage, the candidate offered funding will be supported to develop their application for a place on the MSc-R programme.

Stage 1: Funding Application

Eligible candidates must submit:

1. A CV
2. A personal statement (see further below)
3. A detailed research proposal (see further below)
4. Two academic letters of reference

The personal statement should be no more than 1 page long, and should outline your motivation for, and interest in, postgraduate research in this area. You should highlight details of any previous academic or professional experience related to your research area and any other information you feel is relevant. Please also explain why you are applying to the University of Bristol, why you think you are a suitable candidate for this programme, and how your planned project fits with your future career plans.

The research proposal is your opportunity to showcase your ability and potential. We are not looking for a perfectly polished research proposal, but we are looking for applicants who can demonstrate that they understand the research process and who have, and can articulate, good research ideas.

The research proposal should be approx. 4-6 pages long and must include the following elements:

1. Title
2. Aim and research question(s)
3. Outline, background and importance
4. Approach (methodology/methods)
5. Anticipated timeline/milestones
6. Anticipated training needs
7. Anticipated enrolment basis (full-time or part-time)
8. Bibliography (references)

Please refer to our detailed guidance for writing proposals (below).

Applications must be emailed to postgrad-ethics@bristol.ac.uk by **9am (GMT), 31st May 2024**. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview. Interviews are expected to be held in late June.

Stage 2: MSc-R Application

The candidates for the studentship funding will be identified in the first stage of the process. The successful candidates will be provided with a letter stating the intention to fund their proposed project if they secure a MSc-R place at the University of Bristol. The candidates will also be directed towards potential supervisors for their proposed project. The successful candidate will then be supported to apply for a place on the MSc-R programme at the University of Bristol. Further guidance on that process will follow at that stage.

Topic Areas

Research area – public service ethics

For this studentship we are particularly inviting applications to undertake research project exploring public service ethics.

Ethics is central to public service. Professionals working in health and social care, the police, the military, the civil service, and other areas of public service encounter unique circumstances and challenges – but each profession has, at its core, the principle of ethical conduct in the service of the public. As such, professionals working in public service are typically held to ethical standards, receive ethics education and training, and may be supported or overseen by ethics support services, such as ethics committees. Despite this, recent scandals have shone a spotlight on ethical standards, education, and support in public service.

We are seeking a MScR student to work with us to develop and conduct a 12-month project exploring public service ethics, specifically with a view to transferring learning from healthcare ethics into other public service areas (and vice versa). We welcome applications from any suitably qualified public service professional, as well as recent graduates with an interest in the area.

Project proposals are invited on any aspect of ethics in public service. Possible areas for research include, but are not limited to:

- Ethical standards in public service
- Teaching and learning professional ethics for public service
- Ethics support for public service, e.g., ethics committees
- Ethical competence in public service
- Trust and trustworthiness in the public service professions
- Duty & supererogation in public service, inc. duties to oneself and others
- Social media and public service ethics
- Ethical regulation and oversight of public service professions

Research interests in overview

Whilst preference will, be given to projects in public service ethics, we also welcome proposals in the areas of our main research interests:

Research area	Suggested contact
End-of-life ethics and law	r.huxtable@bristol.ac.uk giles.birchley@bristol.ac.uk
Reproduction, families, and healthcare	zusanadeans@bristol.ac.uk j.ives@bristol.ac.uk
Methodology in Bioethics	j.ives@bristol.ac.uk
Research ethics and integrity	zusanadeans@bristol.ac.uk
Clinical ethics support and education	r.huxtable@bristol.ac.uk giles.birchley@bristol.ac.uk
Invasive procedures, engineering and innovation	r.huxtable@bristol.ac.uk giles.birchley@bristol.ac.uk j.ives@bristol.ac.uk

Guidance for Writing Your MSc-R Research Proposal

Your proposal will be approximately 4-6 pages long and should include the following:

1. Title

The title can either be in the form of a statement that describes what your research will do, or in the form of a question. It should be clear and concise.

2. Aim and research question(s)

Your proposal should have an overarching aim that makes it clear what you are trying to achieve.

Example:

- Aim: *To identify the challenges encountered in and by clinical ethics support services in the UK, and make recommendations for how these should be addressed*

Your proposal should also have specific research questions that can be answered in order to meet your aim. Proposals should have at least one primary question and may also include further secondary questions. Answering the secondary question(s) helps you to answer the primary question. Your primary research question may be very similar to your aim, but should be phrased as question.

Example:

- Primary research question: *What are the challenges encountered in and by clinical ethics support services in the UK, and how should these be addressed?*
- Secondary research questions:
 - What, according to the literature, are the challenges encountered in and by clinical ethics support services, and recommendations for how these should be addressed?
 - What, according to those involved in the provision of clinical ethics support in the UK, are the challenges encountered in and by clinical ethics support services, and recommendations for how these should be addressed?
 - How should the challenges encountered in and by clinical ethics support services in the UK be addressed?

3. Outline, background and importance

Here you should explain what is known about your chosen topic, making reference to relevant literature, and explain what the gaps are in our knowledge/understanding. You should clearly show that we do not currently have an answer (or a good answer) or have several competing answers to the research question(s) you are proposing. You should then explain why answering that question is important and how your work will contribute to our understanding of the issues under examination, thus furthering academic debate.

In this section, your job is to persuade us that you have a good question and that the research is sufficiently important for us to fund your project.

4. Approach (methodology and methods)

Research in bioethics and health law takes various forms and can use a range of different methods. It is important that you are able to demonstrate an entry level understanding of the methods you propose to use, provide an account of why the methods you have chosen can help you answer your research question, and show an appreciation of the challenges and feasibility of your proposed project. It is important that you can demonstrate you have thought carefully about the methods you will use and that you have a plan for conducting your research.

Whatever discipline your proposal is based in, you will need to decide whether you will conduct theoretical/library-based research, or a combination of empirical and theoretical research. Here, we provide some guidance on each:

Theoretical Projects:

Projects may be entirely literature-led. Such projects will essentially involve thinking about the problem conceptually or doctrinally, reading and engaging critically with others' accounts and/or primary legal sources, and using argument to arrive at an answer to the research question(s). The exact process (and the sources you use) will depend on your question and your home discipline but, broadly, you will be critically examining different positions and accounts, looking at what others have said about the issues, and developing your own account of the problem and its solution.

If you are taking this approach, you need to state that you will be undertaking theoretical/ doctrinal research and briefly outline the main sources (e.g. legislation, judgments, arguments and thinkers) you expect to engage with. You do not need to actually start conducting analysis or making an argument, but the best proposals will: (a) make clear the order in which key material and arguments will be tackled and why; and (b) make clear any theoretical commitments and/or lenses through which your analysis will be conducted, making reference to approach(es) in the relevant discipline(s) e.g. philosophy, law, bioethics, sociology.

Combined Empirical-Theoretical Projects:

In addition to theoretical engagement, projects may include an empirical dimension i.e. quantitative or qualitative inquiries, which are designed to help answer the research question(s). Such projects will involve thinking about the problem conceptually, but also undertaking some empirical research that is designed to inform or guide your conceptual thinking. This approach might be captured by the terms "empirical bioethics" and/or "socio-legal studies".

If you anticipate taking such an approach, it is important that you do the following:

- State clearly what the purpose of your empirical research is. For example, are you interviewing people in order to get a better understanding of how to characterise an ethical/legal problem or question? Are you speaking to practitioners or other stakeholders to find out how acceptable or workable a proposed solution to a problem is? Are you gathering data about what people value or prefer in order to inform your own critical judgement?
- State which empirical method(s) you will use (e.g. interviews, focus groups, questionnaires) and why, and demonstrate an understanding of what the chosen method involves.

- State your proposed approach to analysis of any data you plan to collect (e.g. thematic analysis, descriptive statistics).
- If empirical data and theory are to be combined, then the strongest applications will situate the proposed study in the relevant methodological literature e.g. “empirical bioethics” or “socio-legal studies”.

When outlining your approach, you need to show that you have enough preliminary understanding of your proposed methods and methodology to undertake the MSc-R study. It is important that the methods you propose are feasible and will enable you to answer your research questions and meet your aim.

5. Anticipated timeline/milestones

In this section you can demonstrate further understanding of your methods, and the feasibility of what you propose, by defining key milestones (key things that you need to achieve in your project), the order in which you need to do them, and how long you think it will take to do each. Examples of milestones include research ethics approvals, data collection, analysis, chapter drafting, and training. Milestones and timings will change as your project progresses – and you will not necessarily be held to what you propose here. What we are looking for here is for you to demonstrate an understanding of what it is feasible to achieve in the time you have available on the project (12 months full-time or 24 months part-time). You might wish to provide a Gantt chart covering the months of the project. We illustrate below a Gantt chart, which plots milestones on the timeline. The illustration is for one year, using two fictional (and incomplete) examples.

Example:

Theoretical Project:

Month/ Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Lit review												
Draft ch1												
Draft ch2												
Draft ch3												
Draft ch4												
Finalise												

Combined Empirical-Theoretical Project:

Month/ Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Lit review												
Develop protocol												

Ethics approval												
Recruitment												
Data collection												
Data analysis												
Drafting chapters												
Finalise												

6. Anticipated training needs

An MSc-R project involves both research and learning. Applicants are likely to have some but not all of the skills and knowledge needed to undertake their projects. We will see from your CV what experience, training and qualifications you have. What we want here is an honest appraisal of what training – or further training – you feel you would need to undertake in order to carry out your project to the best of your ability.

Examples of possible training areas include law/legal methods, data collection, analysis, teaching, engagement, presenting, conducting literature reviews and writing for publication. You may want to look at what training opportunities are available at the Centre for Ethics in Medicine ([here](#)), as well as what training is available more broadly (e.g. the Population Health Sciences short course programme ([here](#))).

7. Anticipated enrolment basis (full-time or part-time)

Please indicate whether you wish to study on a full-time or part-time basis. Part-time applicants should indicate the anticipated basis of their enrolment (e.g. 50%).

8. Bibliography (references)

Please ensure you properly cite all sources you use in your proposal and include a list of references at the end.