DiSc Research Development Grants

Digital Scholarship at Oxford (DiSc) invites proposals for digital research and research development projects from any University of Oxford researcher or group of researchers working with humanities approaches, materials, or collections, whether experienced in digital scholarship or otherwise. This call invites you to explore if and how digital scholarship approaches might assist you in your work, to develop new and innovative research projects, and, potentially, to help you to transform your field in unforeseen and exciting ways.

With a view to uncovering such unanticipated, unexpected, and potentially paradigm-altering areas of research, **DiSc Research Development Grants** are intended to support researchers who apply successfully to the scheme in thinking creatively and collaboratively, engaging with technical experts, exploring how their research might intersect with digital approaches, and widening the impact and connectedness of their research.

In particular, the call seeks to stimulate and support pilot digital projects that may

- **innovate with** or **create** materials, data, tools, methods, and documentation;
- **build upon** or **release the potential of** existing digital collections, data, databases, and digital resources;
- provide **proof-of-concept** for digital approaches to research topics; and,
- show **potential** for future external funding applications, new research outputs, and a growth in institutional expertise.

The Research Development Grant scheme actively encourages adventurous research, working with external partners, and using innovative and experimental methods and tools. Proposals bringing together multiple Oxford-based projects or collections resources are particularly welcomed.

Researchers proposing projects are encouraged to engage with DiSc's mission to

- build **capacity** in adopting and adapting digital methods in order to enhance research, ask new questions, and produce research outputs;
- increase digital research use of the University's unique resources in the **collections** in the Bodleian Libraries, GLAM, and elsewhere in the institution; and
- build **communities** around approaches, software, and tools, with emphases on training, developing and sharing, and collaboration with others.

The funding is available in three tiers that are intended to support different types and scales of activity, with the provision of technical expertise potentially complementing the funding of other associated costs.

Applications should be made using [IRAMS](#), but prior consultation with the DiSc team is strongly encouraged. The deadline for applications to be submitted to DiSc is Noon on 21st May, and researchers should discuss internal deadlines to allow time for approval with their faculties or departments. Projects may start from 01 October 2024 and must end by 30 June 2025.

Tiers of support

In all the following cases, the financial component of the grant proposal **may** be supplemented or modified by in-kind provision of technical resources (server space, computation facility, software licencing, etc.) and technical expertise (research software engineer time, etc.) at the discretion of DiSc, which may have a total value greater than the financial support offered. We therefore strongly encourage all applicants to engage in discussion with DiSc's team in order to formulate a well-scoped and tailored proposal and ensure that the appropriate tier is selected.

Conversion – grants of up to £12.5k

This tier of funding is intended to support activities that fulfil an existing research need, translate existing research projects into something new, or take the form of a discrete proof of concept or micro-project. These activities might include, for example,

- the *conversion* of existing research infrastructure (databases, datasets, tools, and simple research software and repositories) into systems that are more sustainable, open, and re-usable (however, this does not include simply converting existing datasets for more sustainable data storage);
- the transformation of existing personal research data (such as spreadsheets, digital transcriptions etc.) using digital approaches (small-medium scale visualisation, opening data for analysis and re-use);
- the *renovation and restoration* of degraded research infrastructure (databases, datasets, tools and research software that have already broken and thereby significantly impede current research); or
- a discrete *micro-project* or *proof of concept* that takes first steps applying digital approaches to *analysis* of research material (such as innovative visualisations or experiments with data).

The outcomes of these projects should include suggestions of what new research might be possible using digital scholarship approaches and identification of next steps.

Demonstration – grants of up to £25k

This tier of funding is intended to support the rapid generation and prototyping of digital research approaches and tools in order to provide a platform for innovation and/or further development supported by an external source of funding. These activities might include, for example,

- developing novel approaches to datasets or collections; or,
- generating experimental, proof of concept tools or methods of interaction and analysis.

Outcomes should demonstrate the potential value of the new approaches or tools to the research, academic, or wider ecosystem, and establish grounds for further financial support from external sources.

Development – grants of up to £50k

This larger tier of funding is intended to support a fuller process of development in preparation for seeking substantial external funding for expansion and fulfilment of the research aims for the project. For example, it might support researchers in

- producing a beta or testing version of a piece of research infrastructure (such as a complex dataset and interface);
- undertaking scoping and engagement work to build a collaborative research group (within or beyond the University) around the project by
  - o modelling and socializing a proposed dataset or platform; and,
  - o building cross-disciplinary partnerships around data, collections, and approaches.

For this tier, there is a strong emphasis on developing partnerships beyond traditional disciplinary or institutional boundaries, and on establishing a group of researchers around the creation and use in research of a substantial development in digital scholarship. Clear next steps towards external funding are expected.

Eligibility

The fund's priority is to support academic staff with a paid University contract that includes significant responsibility for research and which is likely to continue for at least two years beyond the submission date of their application. College-only academic staff with a contract that stipulates significant responsibility for research AND who can demonstrate long-standing faculty research connections are also eligible. Researchers approaching humanistic materials, or taking a humanistic approach in **any discipline** are eligible; the lead applicant **does not** need to be in the Humanities Division.

Selection criteria

A panel of DiSc steering committee members will assess applications on the following bases:

1. **Engagement with** the aims of DiSc and the intentions of the DiSc Research Development Grant scheme;
2. **Articulation** of a high-potential project that is well-tailored to the funding tier selected;

3. **Identification** of the benefits of the project and its potential to enhance the digital scholarship ecosystem, institutional expertise and/or, shared research infrastructure;
4. **Potential** for high-quality, impactful, and promising research outcomes, developing new or sustaining existing external research collaborations and partnerships, and for further research development towards **external grant capture**;
5. **Contribution** to the human research environment through the involvement of early-career and fixed term research staff and students; and,
6. **Value** for money; and,
7. Evidence that the type of work proposed **requires DiSc's support** and that it is unlikely to be able to gain funding from elsewhere.

Eligible expenses

Requests for support may include items such as the following:

- Teaching buyout proportional to the grant tier (maximum £2.5k, £5k, or £10k, respectively; please confirm the costs with your college and faculty);
- Research support (cost to be confirmed with the faculty's Research Facilitator) in the form of:
    - Post-doctoral researcher(s);
    - Student support and engagement with your project through micro-internship(s);
- Technical support (please contact the DiSc team to discuss technical support) for:
    - Research Software Engineer, developer, or coder support; and
    - Research Data Management costs using existing University systems.
- Other:
    - <u>Limited</u> digitisation costs;
    - Event costs (please contact the DiSc team to discuss event support); and,
    - Reasonable travel for staff or external visitors/participants making direct input into the project.

Engagement with DiSc and the digital scholarship community

While the principal aim of this call is to stimulate and support new digital research projects at the University, part of DiSc's work includes highlighting and furthering knowledge of the University's work in the field of digital scholarship. To these ends, it is anticipated that researchers leading successfully-funded projects will contribute materials (project information, blog posts, or brief videos, for example) to DiSc's websites and communications channels, as well as being given opportunities to present their work to other members of the University's digital scholarship community at events arranged by DiSc.

Further information

To discuss any aspect of this call, please contact the DiSc team via digitalscholarship@humanities.ox.ac.uk in the first instance.

Further information about DiSc, its aims and work can be found at https://digitalscholarship.web.ox.ac.uk