

Making Academia More Inclusive: Reflections from EDI Fellowship

This past year, I had the fantastic opportunity to work with the NWCDTP EDI Team as an Application Support Fellow. Given that academia remains less diverse and not fully representative of the UK population, I was committed to supporting the DTP's mission to make the DTP doctoral studentship applicant pool more inclusive. And, it was a truly grateful and transformative journey.

With invaluable support from Hannah and Jerome, I piloted a mentorship scheme ([link](#)) aimed at prospective MA/MSc students interested in pursuing a PhD at one of the seven universities within the DTP. The scheme offered tailored advice and support throughout the application process—helping candidates choose the right course and university, identify potential supervisors, and prepare both their PhD and NWCDTP funding applications.

I had the immense pleasure and responsibility of mentoring 17 candidates. I held one-on-one meetings with each of them, maintained active communication through email, answered queries, shared my own experience as a DTP-funded student, and provided detailed feedback on their personal statements and research proposals. Many of the mentees opened up about the significant challenges they had overcome and their aspirations for doctoral study. Through this, I not only honed my ability to give constructive feedback but also grew more sensitive, patient, and understanding. It was a deeply humbling and eye-opening experience to learn about the hidden barriers many faces when applying for a PhD.

In November 2024, I co-led an applicant workshop with Jerome where I shared my personal experiences and answered questions from prospective candidates. I also developed presentation slides offering guidance on topics such as “How to Apply to a University PhD Programme” and “How to Write a Research Proposal,” which are now available on the DTP website.

Early in the fellowship, I collaborated with Pamela, another ApSup, to create an EDI questionnaire aimed at gathering data on equality, diversity, and inclusion issues. In addition, I authored a series of blogs recounting my own application journey—from finding a supervisor and selecting the right department, to securing references, writing and re-writing essays and patiently waiting for outcomes. These blogs ([link](#)) are published on the DTP website and have resonated with many prospective applicants. One reader (and I was delighted to open the email!) described the blog as “humane”—a refreshing contrast to the typically formal and distant tone of application portals. The content produced by me and other EDI Fellows helped make the process more approachable and inspiring.

Finally, I engaged in ongoing discussions about systemic issues in academia with the EDI team and ApSup Fellows. One of the results of this was the blog- “How does it feel to be a First-Generation Student?” ([link](#)) I also joined the EDI Working Group at the School of the Arts, University of Liverpool, where I continue to contribute to EDI-related initiatives in my department.

This fellowship was more than just a professional opportunity—it was a step toward addressing issues that are both systemic and deeply personal to me.