



London Social Media Observatory – Call for Fully Funded PhD Studentship on Social Media and Politics (3.5 years)

Start Date: January, 2026

Application Deadline: November 2nd, 2025

Interview Date: November 27th afternoon, 2025 (online on Teams)

Royal Holloway, University of London is inviting applications for a PhD studentship at the London Social Media Observatory– a new research lab created and directed by Dr. Andreu Casas and funded by UKRI via the Future Leaders Fellowship scheme. The Observatory is composed of a team of 6-8 staff conducting research on social media and politics, using big data, computational methods and tools, surveys and experiments. We are based in Royal Holloway's Bedford Square location in central London.

Project Overview

The [London Social Media Observatory](#) welcomes PhD applications on any topic related to social media and politics. Applications focusing on the curation and moderation of political content on social media platforms, and/or those proposing to use quantitative/computational methods will be given preference. Applicants are also encouraged to think about the societal impact of their research, and for example, about how some of the partners of the Observatory (such as Ofcom and the Electoral Commission) and policymakers would benefit from the research. The PhD candidate will work on their own project, but will also have the opportunity to collaborate with other projects and researchers within the Observatory. The PhD candidate will also benefit from Observatory resources, such as data engineer time to support their data collections and analyses, its wide networks of top international scholars, participation in other international projects, and funding for conferences and training. We strongly encourage applications from candidates of diverse backgrounds and experiences. We are committed to equality, inclusivity, and creating a welcoming environment where everyone can thrive and contribute to impactful research.

The Observatory is a new research lab created and directed by Dr. Andreu Casas and funded by UKRI via the Future Leaders Fellowship scheme. The Observatory hosts several projects related to social media and politics, and is composed of 6-8 staff members, including postdoctoral researchers, PhDs, media and policy officers, research assistants, and a project manager. Currently,

one of the main areas of research is the study of the determinants and effects of the curation and moderation of political speech on social media platforms. Additionally, the Observatory is developing novel computational methods and tools for the study of large amounts of social media data. Other projects hosted by the Observatory include the [What-If](#) Horizon project, and a project co-led by Dr. Janina Beiser-McGrath that looks at how African leaders use social media to communicate about foreign aid and economic development.

Apart from conducting cutting edge research in these areas, the Observatory puts special emphasis on public outreach and societal impact. We currently have partnerships with Ofcom and the Electoral Commission to conduct research and produce policy outputs on common areas of interest. We also plan to organize public events for practitioners, journalists, policymakers, and the general public. As part of our policy efforts, we are currently heavily involved in pushing for better academic access to platform data in the UK, by for example producing evidence for Parliament and Ofcom.

Details of Award

This is a fully funded PhD Studentship for 3.5 years (42 months). The student is expected to submit their thesis within their funded period. The award pays tuition fees up to the value of the full-time **home** UKRI rate for PhD degrees. The stipend for 2025/26 is £22,780/year (which already includes a £2,000/year London Allowance). Additionally, the PhD student will have the opportunity to work a few hours a week on other research projects of the Observatory, or (from the second year onwards) as teaching assistant for the Department of Politics and International Relations. The exact amount of hours however, as well as the hourly rate, will vary depending on the exact needs and duties throughout the PhD. The PhD student will also have access to funds for conference travel, and for data collection (e.g. survey, or survey experiment/s) for their PhD project.

Eligibility

Only home UK students are eligible.

Candidates should have a Master degree (with Distinction, or Merit with a Distinction in the dissertation) in political science, communication science, economics, or in a computational discipline, as long as the candidate also has experience conducting research in a social science field.

How to Apply

Candidates need to apply by sending the following material by email to Dr. Andreu Casas (andreu.casas@rhul.ac.uk) [please include "LSMO PhD Studentship" in the title of the email]:

- A cover letter
- Curriculum vitae (CV)
- A brief research proposal, of 1000-2000 words max., explaining why you are interested in researching this topic, your novel substantive and/or methodological approach, and a short description of 3 potential papers/chapters. For further guidance see [here](#).

- A writing sample (ideally this should be between 5,000 and 10,000 words but this is flexible). This could be a piece of academic writing (e.g. an MA dissertation); or a text written in the course of any current or previous employment or voluntary/community work.

Candidates invited to interview will be asked to supply a transcript of their university-level grades.

Please **submit your application by November 2nd, 2025 at midnight.**

Further Information

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a virtual interview on Teams in the afternoon of November 27th, 2025.