

CSEE PhD Scholarships 2023-24 - Teaching LLMs to Use Customer Service tools

The School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering (CSEE) at the University of Essex is offering one PhD research Scholarship to work on the project *Teaching LLMs to Use Customer Service Tools* with Algomo. Please refer to the Project Details document for further information.

Algomo is a London-based Deep-tech startup working on multilingual customer service automation. Founded in early 2022, has been working on Large Language Models (LLMs) to help companies of any size fully automate their customer service in 100+ languages, easily and affordably. Their mission and award-winning technology have been recognised by and sponsored by innovation grants from the UK and EU.

The successful applicant will receive a full PhD scholarship, including full tuition fee discount for three years of study, a stipend payment towards your living costs and Proficio funding towards training, conferences, and travel.

Full funding scholarship available is as outlined below.

Type of award	Funding available
Full-funding award	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Home tuition fee waiver.■ Living costs stipend at the UK Research and Innovation recommended level per year. For 2023-24 this will be £18,622■ £2,500 (in total) in the University of Essex Proficio funding, which may be used to 'buy' advanced skills training, including conferences and travel.

Terms and conditions

Eligibility

- These scholarships are restricted to students who are assessed as Home fee payers and are entirely self-funded*.
- Receipt of the scholarship is subject to applying for PhD Computer Science. You will need to register as a postgraduate student at the University of Essex for the 2023-24 academic year on a PhD commencing in January 2024 or mutually agreed shortly thereafter, and meeting all conditions of our offer.
- Students must have achieved an honours degree (1st class or 2:1, or equivalent). A Masters in a relevant subject is desirable (but not essential) and substantive previous professional experience in the relevant area can be counted towards this requirement.
- If English is not your first language, you will also need to meet the English language entry requirements for the PhD you have applied for.
- This scholarship is available for three years of study only.
- The award cannot be held in conjunction with any other University of Essex scholarships.
- Successful applicants should be available for promotional activities.

*Students receiving a repayable loan to fund their studies will be considered as self-funded.

Students who are not eligible

The following students are NOT eligible for this scholarship regardless of meeting the above criteria:

- Students who are assessed as Overseas fee paying students.
- This scholarship award does not apply to deferred entry. Where a scholarship has been awarded to a student who subsequently defers entry to the following academic year, the award will be withdrawn and the applicant will be considered again in line with the terms and conditions that apply in the new proposed year of entry.
- Students who are fully or partly sponsored.
- Students on a 4-year integrated PhD course.

How to apply

The key first step is to contact Dr Serafeim Perdikis (serafeim.perdikis@essex.ac.uk) who will be the supervisor for the successful applicant, for an informal discussion before applying.

You will need to apply for a PhD place in the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering at the University of Essex, and specify that your application is to work on the project **Teaching LLMs to Use Customer Service Tools**. Our online application process is quick and straightforward, and the following pages give you all the details: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/join-our-research-community> . You should apply for a place to study as soon as possible.

You can learn about postgraduate research at the University of Essex more generally and search for departmental research expertise here: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/postgraduate/research>.

► You should apply for PhD scholarship funding separately from your online PhD study application. Please email your Research Proposal and CV to serafeim.perdikis@essex.ac.uk by the deadline of **Friday 1st December 2023 at 11:59 GMT**.

Selection process

This is a competitive scholarship with one award available. Applications will be considered by a panel, based on the quality of their proposal, and demonstration of the following desirable skills and knowledge:

- - Strong machine learning/artificial intelligence/data analysis background (demonstrated with relevant MSc degrees, previous project portfolio, code, published papers, etc.)
- - Strong applied math and/or programming/computer science background
- - Strong coding skills. Especially Python (but, experience with any object-oriented language appreciated)
- - Experience with tools such as Python Notebooks (Jupyter, Google Collab, etc.)
- - Experience with Natural Language Processing problems.
- - Experience with Deep Learning, especially Generative Deep Learning.
- - Experience with Reinforcement Learning (especially Deep Reinforcement Learning).

Interviews for shortlisted candidates are likely to be held in the week commencing 6th November 2023.

Payment arrangements

- The tuition fee discount as part of this scholarship will be made available as a reduction on the tuition fee that is payable on registration at the University. Payment cannot be offset against a tuition fee deposit if one is required.
- If you intermit from your course, you may, at the discretion of the University, be entitled to a pro-rata payment of the remainder of your award on your return to study. Please contact the [Funding Team](#) for further information.
- This scholarship is awarded for each year of study for a period of three years. The fee element will be deducted automatically, and the stipend will be paid in termly instalments.
- Awards are granted for one year in the first instance but will be renewed, subject to the award holder's satisfactory progress (as defined by the Code of Practice: Postgraduate Research Degrees), for a second and third year – up to a maximum tenure of nine terms or three years, provided the award holder is still engaged in full-time research (and excepting the circumstances stated in the section on termination).
- Where progress is satisfactory, renewal of the award is automatic. Students who wish to extend their period of study beyond the nine terms will have to meet the additional costs themselves.

Scholarship suspension

Students must be registered and meet the above conditions to receive payment. The bursary will be suspended during a period of approved leave of absence (intermission) where this period covers a whole or part of an academic year and may be reinstated on your return to full-time study subject to the conditions above. On your return to study, you will be entitled to the balance of the bursary for the stage. There will be no payment for repeat periods of study in any circumstances.

Holiday

Scholarship holders are entitled to a maximum of eight weeks' holiday (including bank holidays and the University closure at Christmas) per annum and pro-rata. Holidays should be agreed in advance with the supervisor and, in cases where the awardee is engaged in teaching and demonstrating, with the approval of the head of the student's department, school or centre.

Termination of Scholarship

The University will terminate a scholarship when progress or performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory. The scholarship will be terminated if a student ceases to be registered as a student with the University, or for good cause at the discretion of our Dean of Postgraduate Research & Education, or their nominee for this purpose.

If a scholarship is terminated prematurely for any reason, an awardee must repay to the University any monies including maintenance, travel, subsistence, fees overpaid from the date of the termination of the scholarship. If an awardee submits his/her thesis before the end of the scholarship, the scholarship will be terminated on the date of submission. If an awardee takes up full-time employment whilst in receipt of a scholarship, the scholarship will be terminated as of the first day of employment.

Transferability

Change of course within the University of Essex will not affect the continuation of a scholarship, providing that the student continues to be registered on an eligible PhD course within an eligible department.

Data Privacy Statement

The University of Essex takes confidentiality very seriously, your application form will only be seen by members of staff involved in processing your application. Information is kept in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as it applies in the UK, tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data will be used solely for statistical purposes and electronic record keeping and may be made available to authorised University staff to allow statistical information to be analysed.

This data will not be passed to any other third party without your consent, except when the University is required to do so by law. Any formal enquiries concerning the use of data noted here should be addressed to the Head of Student Services.

Resolution of disputes

Acceptance of this award constitutes acceptance of these terms and conditions. Registered students should contact the [Funding Team](#) in the first instance for guidance regarding this award. In cases not covered by the above terms and conditions, or where a student claims exceptional circumstances, or disputes a decision not to make payments due under an award, final appeals on decisions regarding eligibility must be made via the [Student Complaints process](#). The Academic Registrar or their nominee will review the case and his/her decision will be final.

These terms and conditions apply to the academic year 2023-24. The University of Essex reserves the right to update these terms and conditions as necessary.