DUAL PhD AWARD

in Development Studies

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

University of Ghana × University of Manchester

9	4 YEARS	28 FEB 2027
FULLY-FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS OVER THREE YEARS	DUAL-AWARD DOCTORAL PROGRAMME	APPLICATION DEADLINE

- Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER)
- University of Ghana Business School (UGBS)
- Global Development Institute (GDI)

Research focus: GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION | DIGITAL TRANSITION

1. Background

The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana and the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS) have partnered with the Global Development Institute (GDI) at the University of Manchester to launch a new Dual PhD Award in development theory, policy and management. The Universities of Ghana (UG) and Manchester (UoM) have been collaborating on development research projects throughout this century. Their partnership was formalised in March 2024 when the two universities signed a new Memorandum of Understanding in Accra. This MoU, which flows from the University of Manchester's Africa Strategy and GDI's equitable partnerships initiative, will support a wide range of new and ongoing joint activities, across research, doctoral studies, teaching and both staff and student exchanges. GDI has particularly strong links with ISSER and UGBS, having partnered with colleagues on several major research initiatives over the last 25 years, including the Chronic Poverty Research Centre, the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, and the Future Dams project. Current collaborations include the African Cities Research Consortium and the Ford Foundation funded Observatory for Forests and Just Transitions.

This new award will start accepting students from October 2027. Every student on the programme will be co-supervised by academics from both universities and successful graduates will receive a doctoral award from both institutions. The second year of the four-year programme will be spent at the University of Manchester.

We have nine fully-funded PhD scholarships for this award, with three to be offered for entry into the programme for each of the next three years (i.e. there will be three for the first intake in September 2027). This scholarship will cover tuition fees for the duration of the programme, a return flight to and from Manchester, plus UK visa costs, the health service surcharge and a stipend for a one-year stay in Manchester. We also welcome candidates who are able to financially support themselves through the programme without this scholarship. All candidates must have a postgraduate degree in a relevant subject, with an overall average over 65% and a minimum mark of 65% in the dissertation. If English is not your first language you will need to provide evidence of English language proficiency (IELTS 7.0 with 7.0 in writing). Applicants that do not meet these requirements cannot be considered. UG and UoM are committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion and we encourage applications to this programme from groups that are currently under-represented within academia.

All doctoral students on the Dual Award will undertake research into one of the two main thematic areas: the green energy transition and/or the digital transition, and how these are reshaping development prospects in Africa. These twin transitions hold great significance for the future of development in Africa and are processes on which ISSER, UGBS and GDI have internationally-leading expertise. Candidates are encouraged to develop their doctoral research projects with close reference to the issues and questions set out below on these thematic areas in Section 3 of the call. We expect a strong focus on what these challenges mean for Africa, and for Ghana in particular, although comparative perspectives are welcome. Please read through the proposed research areas carefully before writing and submitting your proposal, following the structure for a research proposal set out here. **Candidates must contact a maximum of two of the potential supervisors named below - one from each university - for support in strengthening their proposal**. We encourage proposals that adopt different disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary perspectives to the themes and questions mapped out below, as long as they remain within the remit of development studies.

2. Application process and timelines

Applicants should undertake the following steps:

- Check that they meet the entry requirements for this PhD Award, as detailed above
- Read through the research themes and proposed project areas below.
- Develop a draft PhD proposal that fits within one of the specific dimensions mapped out below. Please see here on how to write a research proposal.
- Identify a maximum of two colleagues from the lists below - one from the University of Ghana, one from the University of Manchester - who you think have the expertise to help you develop your proposal and act as supervisors should you be successful in gaining access to the programme

- Share your proposal with these two potential supervisors for comments and guidance on further improving it prior to submission. You should also send an up-to-date CV and evidence of academic qualifications. This must be done by **8 January 2027** at the latest to allow time for feedback and revisions and it is strong recommended to do this earlier if at all possible.
- Submit your initial proposal to isser-graduate@ug.edu.gh by **28 February 2027**.

Timeline

No	Dates	Activities
1	November 2026 - January 2027	Candidates check eligibility; develop draft proposal in consultation with potential supervisors
2	28 February 2027	Submit the final proposal to isser-graduate@ug.edu.gh and apply through the university of Ghana admissions portal (Apply Now | UG School of Graduate Studies)
3	March 2027	An independent committee of senior University of Ghana and University of Manchester staff rank proposals for access to the programme (including fee paying applicants) and draws up a short-list of scholarship and non-scholarship candidates for interview
4	April 2027	Interviews for short-listed candidates undertaken
5	Mid-May 2027	Final decision communicated to applicants
6	End of May 2027	UG send selected candidates to UoM for pre-screening
7	July 2027	Candidates formally apply to UG and UoM
8	September 2027-August 2028	Students enroll on programme in both Universities (Ghana & Manchester) and complete first year in Ghana
9	September 2028-August 2029	Students relocate to the University of Manchester for their second year
10	September 2029-2031	Students complete the final two years of their programme at the University of Ghana

3. Research themes for UG-UoM Dual PhD Award

The research themes for this dual award have been identified collaboratively by experts at ISSER, UGBS and GDI. They focus on two of the most pressing global development challenges of the Twenty First Century, namely the green energy transition and the digital transition, with scope for students to also focus on the links between the two processes. We are asking two broad types of questions about these transitions here: What roles are African countries playing in these transitions at a global scale and what does this mean for their development prospects? And, how are these transitions playing out within African countries: what are the drivers, processes and emerging impacts and what do they mean for questions of development, inequality and justice within Africa?

3.1 Research Theme One: Africa and the green energy transition

What implications does the green energy transition have for development countries in Africa and their role in the changing global political economy of development?

The promotion of green energy transitions by a wide range of actors – international and national, public and private – has raised both hopes and concerns for what this means for the developmental prospects of countries in Africa. Will the shift away from fossil fuels create new opportunities for countries that possess the resources critical to the green energy transition – such as lithium – to advance their development ambitions or a new phase of international exploitation? Who will be the winners and losers from efforts to promote renewable energy projects within countries and communities? What possibilities are there for pursuing green energy transitions in ways that secure both social and environmental justice at multiple levels?

We welcome proposals for doctoral research projects on Ghana and the developmental implications of the green energy transition on the following broad research questions:

The political economy of the green energy transition

What are the political economy drivers and obstacles to the green energy transition in Ghana? Which institutions (political, regulatory, financial), interests (public/private/civil, fossil fuel/renewable) and ideas (extractivist, resource nationalist, neoliberal, emancipatory) are shaping this process and with what effects?

Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: political economy of the green energy transition

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Kofi Takyi Asante ktasante@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Political economy of development; green transition; green colonialism
Dzifa Torvikey gdtorvikey@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Qualitative methods, state and institutions, political economy of resource extraction
Simon Bawakyillenuo sbawakyillenuo@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Climate change, environmental governance, energy policy, green economy, political economy renewable energy, mixed methods
Abdul-gafaru Abdulai agabdulai@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Extractive sector governance, politics of energy transition, Qualitative case studies.
Tom Lavers tom.lavers@manchester.ac.uk	GDI / UoM	Political economy of energy transitions, process tracing
Sam Hickey Sam.Hickey@manchester.ac.uk	GDI / UoM	Politics of energy transitions, qualitative and comparative methods
Katarzyna Cieslik katarzyna.cieslik@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Political economy of agricultural data flows, political ecology of data extractivism, mixed methods
Pritish Behuria pritish.behuria@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Political Economy of energy transitions, qualitative methods
Elisa Gambino elisa.gambino@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Private energy providers and their influence of green transition
Adam Aboobaker adam.aboobaker@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Political economy of the transition; framing effects of just transition communication strategies; theoretical and econometric models
Tomas Frederiksen tomas.frederiksen@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Extractive industries and development, qualitative methods

Green energy transitions and economic development

What implications do moves towards a green energy transition have for the development trajectory of African countries within the wider political economy of development? What are the viable pathways through which countries might secure value addition, engage in industrial upgrading, move up value chains, benefit from external investment and technology transfer, and avoid becoming 'adversely incorporated' into a wider process of accumulation? How can countries manage this in the context of ongoing geopolitical fragmentation?

Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: green energy transitions and economic development

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Kwame Adjei-Mantey kadjei-mantey@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Energy transitions and development outcomes, quantitative methods
Albert Ahenkan AAhenkan@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Green energy transition and circular economy (Greening the waste sector), qualitative
Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai agabdulai@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Tensions between energy transition and structural transformation, qualitative methods
Peter Quartey pquartey@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Development Finance,Climate Finance and Development, Circular Economy and Youth Employment, Digital Finance
Pritish Behuria pritish.behuria@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Green industrial policy, qualitative methods
Elisa Gambino elisa.gambino@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	The role of FDIs (and their governance) in industrialisation
Osman Ouattara osman.ouattara@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Empirical contribution
Adam Aboobaker adam.aboobaker@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Theoretical models of distributional conflict and structural transformation

Governing the trade-offs between green energy transitions and sustainable development

What economic, social and environmental trade-offs are involved in green energy transitions? Examples could include carbon sinks taking up large tracts of land, lost income from fossil fuel investments etc. What implications does pursuing a green energy transition have for questions of energy access? How can these trade-offs and implications be governed and managed in sustainable ways?

Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: governing the trade-offs between green energy transitions and sustainable development

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ Institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Tom Lavers tom.lavers@manchester.ac.uk	GDI / UoM	Politics of land, political economy of energy transitions. Case studies, process tracing
Adam Aboobaker adam.aboobaker@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Models of trade union bargaining and the green transition
Aba Obrumah Crentsil aocrentsil@ug.edu.gh	ISSER /UG	Energy transitions, climate risks and energy poverty; mixed methods
Kwame Adjei-Mantey kadjei-mantey@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Economics of energy transitions, energy poverty, energy-environment nexus, energy-development nexus, quantitative methods

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ Institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Tomas Frederiksen tomas.frederiksen@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Extractive industries and development, qualitative methods
Simon Bawakyillenuo sbawakyillenuo@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Climate change, environmental governance, energy policy, green economy, political economy renewable energy, mixed methods
Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai agabdulai@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Tensions between energy transition and structural transformation, qualitative methods

Towards a just green energy transition?

Who will be the winners and losers from efforts to promote renewable energy projects, including green energy infrastructure, within countries and communities? What governance mechanisms are available and/or required to ensure that local communities and voices play a role in shaping green energy transitions?

Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: towards a just green energy transition

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Aba Obrumah Crentsil aocrentsil@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Gender, vulnerability and energy transitions; mixed methods
Simon Bawakyillenuo sbawakyillenuo@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Climate change, environmental governance, energy policy, green economy, political economy renewable energy, mixed methods
Abdul-Gafaaru Abdulai agabdulai@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Critical mineral projects and community experiences, qualitative methods
Kofi Takyi Asante ktasante@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Critical political economy, class analysis, green colonialism
Katarzyna Cieslik katarzyna.cieslik@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Participatory modelling for green transition in agriculture, mixed methods

3.2 Research Theme Two: Africa and the digital transition

What implications does the ongoing digital transition and associated processes of technological transformation have for development in Africa?

The increasing availability of digital technologies promises to enhance development trajectories across a wide range of sectors whilst also heralding new forms of inequality and injustice. Optimists view the digital transition as an opportunity for countries to secure higher levels of financial inclusion, improved productivity, higher levels of economic formalisation and improved tax revenues, smarter cities, improved levels of governance and accountability and greater efficiency in the public sector. Sceptics, meanwhile, voice concerns about digital inequalities and injustices, the environmental costs of the infrastructure required to drive the digital transition and the precarious nature of employment within 'platform capitalism'. We welcome proposals that explore the ways in which the digital transition is unfolding in developing countries and the implications this has for development at multiple levels and across multiple dimensions, with particular reference to the following questions:

Digital transitions and economic development: between productivity and precarity?

How and to what extent are digital technologies (including artificial intelligence) reshaping production systems and labour markets in developing countries? How are firms and workers responding to the potential and pitfalls of new technologies? Are these leading to higher levels of innovation and productivity and/or precarity? Examples could include AI adoption in business processes, training, and managerial decision-making; technology and skills transfer within firms and across value chains; digital entrepreneurship ecosystems and platform-based business models; value creation and upgrading in fintech and digital value chains; opportunities and barriers to innovation adoption among SMEs in Africa.

Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: digital transitions and economic development - between productivity and precarity

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Edward Asiedu edasiedu@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Empirical Applications and Evaluation of Impact
Patrick Asuming (Prof) poasuming@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Empirical Applications and Evaluation of Impact
Richard Heeks richard.heeks@manchester.ac.uk	GDI / UoM	Digital development / ICT4D
Gianluca Iazzolino gianluca.iazzolino@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Digital development/ICT4D, AI infrastructure (data centres)
Osman Ouattara (Prof) osman.ouattara@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Empirical applications
Richmond Atta-Ankomah rankomah@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UoM	Empirical application and quantitative methods
Michael Kodom mkodom@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UoM	Empirical applications / Mixed methods

Governing digital finance and money for development?

How are new architectures of digital finance emerging in Africa and with what implications for financial inclusion, governance and development? This could be explored in relation to digital finance in agricultural and SME value chains; the role of digital finance in bridging gaps within the current financial infrastructures; AI-driven credit scoring and its distributional effects; supply-side constraints in digital finance, including agent networks and platform governance; mobile money, remittances, and cross-border financial flows; digital financial services and entrepreneurship development; the taxation of digital finance and implications for domestic revenue mobilization; financial fraud, cybersecurity, and AI-based detection systems. There are also important developments around the evolution of mobile money and of digital currencies, raising questions around financial risks and resilience, trust and regulation, and the deployment of new monetary technologies for economic and social purposes.

Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: Governing digital finance and money for development

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Richmond Atta-Ankomah rankomah@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Digital finance and Development
Michael Kodom mkodom@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Digital finance and Development
Elikplimi Komla Agbloyor ekagbloyor@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Digital Finance, FinTech and Taxation of Digital Financial Services
Nana Amma Asante-Poku naasante-poku@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Digital finance and Development
Gianluca Iazzolino gianluca.iazzolino@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Digital finance/Fintech, Digital financial services for farmers

Digital (in)justice?

In what ways are the adoption and outcomes of digital technologies structured across different groups, including across gender, generation and class? Is there evidence of a (growing) digital divide and if so how could this be addressed? What are the barriers to digital transformation in Africa, including infrastructure gaps, institutional constraints, market failures and power asymmetries in global digital markets?

Table 8: Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: Digital (in)justice

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Richmond Atta-Ankomah rankomah@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Quantitative empirical research
Kofi Takyi Asante ktasante@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Critical political economy analysis, qualitative methodology
Michael Kodom mkodom@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Disparities in digital financial adoption, use, and outcomes
Dzifa Torvikey gdtorvikey@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Gender disparities, digital resource access and control
Nana Amma Asante-Poku naasante-poku@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Gender disparities, qualitative, quantitative
Katarzyna Cieslik katarzyna.cieslik@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Data justice in agrarian contexts, data stewardship and data trust, data commons, interdisciplinary methods (incl. computer science)
Gianluca Iazzolino gianluca.iazzolino@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Digital labour, Digital humanitarianism

Digital transitions and climate change?

What are the links between the digital transition and climate change in Africa? Examples include climate-smart digital solutions in agriculture and urban systems, the links between renewable energy systems and digital technologies and critical explorations of the trade-offs between the digital transformations and efforts to mitigate climate change.

Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: digital transitions and climate change

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Richmond Atta-Ankomah rankomah@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Quantitative empirical research, climate change, agricultural value chains
Andrew Agyei-Holmes aagyeiholmes@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Quantitative empirical research
Katarzyna Cieslik katarzyna.cieslik@manchester.ac.uk	UoM/GDI	Twin green - between 'green transition' and 'digital transformation' in agriculture, livelihoods/ agricultural modernisation tradeoffs, mixed methods
Gianluca Iazzolino gianluca.iazzolino@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	AI-energy nexus (mutual shaping of digital and energy policies)

The politics of digital transitions: towards improved public sector effectiveness and governance?

What are the political economy drivers (ideas, interests, institutions) of the digital transition in Africa? Can the digital transition lead to higher levels of public sector efficiency across sectors, improved governance and higher levels of accountability? This theme can incorporate the institutional and regulatory dimensions of digital transformation. Core research areas could include the political economy of AI and digital infrastructure development; the governance of digital platforms and data systems (in multiple sectors); the role of digital technologies in social sectors such as health, education and social protection; digital identity systems and state capacity

Table 10: Contacts for further discussion and proposal development: the politics of digital transitions - towards improved public sector effectiveness and governance?

Name and email address	Institutional affiliation (department/ institute and university)	Research and methods expertise
Kofi Takyi Asante ktasante@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Critical political economy analysis, qualitative methodology
Gordon Abekah-Nkrumah gabekah-nkrumah@ug.edu.gh	UGBS/UG	Politics of digital transition in health systems
Nana Amma Asante-Poku naasante-poku@ug.edu.gh	ISSER/UG	Political economy analysis in educational settings, qualitative
Gianluca Iazzolino gianluca.iazzolino@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Digital Public Infrastructure, Digital ID
Sam Hickey Sam.Hickey@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Political economy analysis, public sector effectiveness, governance; qualitative, case-study, comparative.
Mohammed Ibrahim mohammed.ibrahim-2@manchester.ac.uk	GDI/UoM	Public administration and management, development politics, service delivery, qualitative methods

APPLICATION DEADLINE

28 FEBRUARY 2027

Submit the final proposal with the full application as specified in the call.