

# Providing a springboard for postgraduates from low-socioeconomic backgrounds to thrive in research and beyond

# MARTINGALE

POSTGRADUATE FOUNDATION

## What is the Martingale Foundation?

The Martingale Foundation supports a new generation of postgraduates to thrive in research. Through fully-funded Scholarships and access to a community of pioneering leaders, we enable and nurture talented individuals from low-socioeconomic backgrounds to thrive within world-leading postgraduate research. We have found that Martingale Scholars often face systemic challenges due to unfamiliarity with the research culture they are operating in. We strive to raise awareness and take steps to support the development of a culture which enables talented individuals to succeed in research, regardless of financial or family background.

Find out more about Martingale on our website: [martingale.foundation](https://martingale.foundation)

 **100+** Scholars supported by Martingale

## Building Relationships

We have found that many Martingale Scholars can feel a reluctance to reach out for help within their universities, due to fears of 'admitting defeat' or jeopardising their academic standing. For some, they may be unsure where to go to for help in their universities. We have built close relationships with our partner universities and departments, each of which has dedicated Martingale tutors to provide Scholar support. Martingale has regular check-ins with Scholars, allowing us to signpost support when they face problems that they are unsure how to address. Evaluation has shown that the Scholars highly value Martingale's role as an intermediary and advocate.

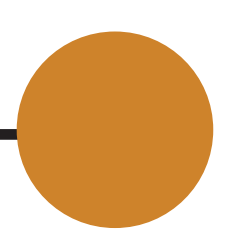
Many students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds find that they don't have the networks or contacts that other students have. We work with experienced professionals to provide training in areas such as networking and vocal skills, and opportunities for Scholars to engage with academics, industry professionals and more. This builds confidence and connections, both of which are vital for a successful career within academia or industry.

 **16** Martingale Tutors

## What Martingale Does to Prepare Students

For those unfamiliar with the doctoral admissions process, applying for a PhD can be a challenging and sometimes confusing process, partly due to a lack of uniformity and transparency. Martingale is aware that prospective Scholars may not have suitable contacts or knowledge to support them finding the most suited PhD project and to successfully navigate all the steps to obtain a PhD place.

To combat this, prospective Martingale Scholarship candidates apply to Martingale before applying to universities. This means Martingale can support them with their PhD applications through our dedicated PhD Navigator Programme, which takes participants through the end-to-end process of finding supervisors and applying for PhDs, giving them the contacts and confidence to pursue a PhD. We have found this is particularly beneficial for those from non-research-intensive university backgrounds who may have had less exposure to academic career pathways in research-intensive universities.

 **>400hrs** of pre-enrolment Scholar support from Martingale and partner university staff per year

## Creating a Supportive Community

Over the last two years, Martingale has learnt a lot about the challenges faced by those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds during postgraduate research. One of the biggest areas that can pose a challenge is a perceived lack of community and 'sense of belonging' within their institution. With the 'Understanding the Mental Health of Doctoral Researchers (U-DOC)' survey finding a strong association between imposter syndrome and depression and anxiety,<sup>1</sup> it is clear that it is vital to build a community which allows students to feel like they belong.

At Martingale, by building a supportive community of like-minded Scholars and supporters, we aim to help build both personal and academic confidence. Our external evaluation has found that the Martingale Scholar community has made a significant difference, helping Scholars feel more motivated and confident.

<sup>1</sup> Hazell, C.M., Chapman, L., Valeix, S.F. et al. Understanding the mental health of doctoral researchers: a mixed methods systematic review with meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. Syst Rev 9, 197 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-020-01443-1>

 **>200hrs** of one-to-one Scholar support from Martingale staff per year

## Solve for X

Solve for X is Martingale's flagship development programme activity which provides professional and innovative training and networking that ensures Scholars have the skills, confidence and networks that are essential for their career. We host a Solve for X Training Camp for Masters Scholars and a Solve for X Challenge for Scholars at the end of their second year of PhD studies.

For both programmes, Scholars are arranged into interdisciplinary groups to work through industry-provided or industry-inspired challenges and develop a proposed solution. Scholars then pitch their solutions to a panel comprising of industry and academic experts.

## Access to and Success in Research-Intensive Postgraduate Courses Report

In August 2024, Martingale Foundation and Public First brought together top researchers and policy specialists in the area of access to postgraduate study for a roundtable discussion on the challenges of transitioning from a non-research-intensive institution at undergraduate level to a research-intensive institution for postgraduate study or research, and how best to support these students to access and thrive in postgraduate degrees. The roundtable culminated in the publication of a report, 'Access to and Success in Research-Intensive Postgraduate Courses'.

Read the report here:

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