UKRI-BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships: Call guidance text

Application deadline: 1st May 2019

Summary

Investments in doctoral training are a key component of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council’s (UKRI-BBSRC) overarching goals to develop research talent and skills. UKRI-BBSRC’s vision is for an innovative, inclusive and outcomes-focussed programme of doctoral training to build and maintain the capacity of core bioscience disciplines, and deliver skills for impact across the UK economy.

UKRI-BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP) provide PhD training in areas of bioscience research relevant to UKRI-BBSRC’s remit and strategic research priorities. DTPs also provide a breadth of professional development training opportunities to enhance the capabilities of doctoral candidates and develop a world-class, highly skilled workforce for the UK.

Building on the two previous DTP programmes¹, institution-level or multi-institution bids are invited to apply to the third phase of UKRI-BBSRC DTPs. The objectives of the scheme are:

- Build and maintain the capacity of core disciplines in biotechnology and biological science to advance the frontiers of bioscience and to respond to strategic challenges;
- Develop highly-skilled people with the specialist understanding and technical capability to produce, manage, interpret, disseminate and use new knowledge and technologies relevant to cutting edge bioscience;
- Produce a cohort of researchers with the capability, awareness and openness to work collaboratively across disciplines, sectors and internationally to understand and address academic, economic and societal challenges. Partnerships will provide opportunities and encouragement for doctoral candidates to seek out these experiences;
- Create an inclusive and supportive training environment for doctoral candidates;
- Deliver evidence-based impact from its public investment.

Partnerships applying to this call must demonstrate how their proposal will address and meet these objectives.

The deadline for receipt of full proposals is 1st May 2019.

¹ https://bbsrc.ukri.org/skills/investing-doctoral-training/dtp/
Number of Awards and Funding Available

It is anticipated that up to 15 DTPs will be awarded. Total funding of £170M is available to support **up to 340 four-year studentships per annum, including at least 90 CASE studentships, for five consecutive intakes**, the first being in 2020-2021 and the final cohort commencing in 2024-2025. The first three intakes are guaranteed; the final two intakes will be dependent on the outcome of a Mid-term Review. Awards will be made in the form of single profiled Training Grants. The normal flexibility of UKRI Training Grants will apply, enabling institutions to part-fund studentships from other sources.

Eligibility

All UK based Research Organisations that are eligible to receive UKRI funding for research, have the infrastructure in place to deliver doctoral training and meet the UKRI-BBSRC research income threshold described below, will be eligible to submit a proposal for a DTP.

UKRI-BBSRC is keen to see the training of doctoral candidates in broad-based centres of research excellence which promote and facilitate inter- and multi-disciplinary working and expose doctoral candidates to a wide range of expertise. To this end, UKRI-BBSRC will only award institutional-level and multi-institutional level Partnerships, and wishes to encourage multi-institutional bids between Research Organisations in addressing its training priorities. Through this approach, UKRI-BBSRC expects integrated plans for research, innovation and training which meet UKRI-BBSRC’s strategic priorities, address vulnerable capabilities and foster inter-disciplinarity.

Research Organisations – or consortia – that wish to apply for a DTP must hold a summed minimum of **£20M** in UKRI-BBSRC research grant spend, over the three year period from 2015/16 to 2017/18. **Annex 2** provides a list of Research Organisations and the level of UKRI-BBSRC responsive and managed mode funding (including international and collaborative grants and fellowships, but excluding training grants, capital or strategic institute funding) during this period.

A Research Organisation may **only submit one proposal as lead applicant**. A DTP must include a degree-awarding Research Organisation within the Partnership. There is no limit to the number of Research Organisations which can be involved in a multi-institutional Partnership. Research Organisations intending to submit an individual proposal, not in partnership with others, should contact UKRI-BBSRC to discuss this.

Research Organisations will normally only be involved in one DTP proposal, however, there may be circumstances where a Research Organisation wishes to make a case to be part of two or more Partnerships. Research Organisations considering being part of more than one Partnership should contact the UKRI-BBSRC office for advice. If a Research Organisation does wish to be involved in more than one Partnership there must be no double counting of research grant spend: a group or department (and the staff and funding involved) cannot itself be included in more than one proposal. For example, the Research Organisation may decide that a particular department should be part of a DTP proposal based on a specific subject area, while the remainder of the Research Organisation is part of a second Partnership on a different research area. This is permissible, but Research Organisations are advised to consider carefully the implications of this approach.

The Research Organisations in a DTP will be expected to demonstrate full commitment to the Partnerships in which they are involved. UKRI-BBSRC reserves the right to terminate any Partnership performing poorly.
Working in Partnership

Applications are encouraged to represent a consortia of academic and non-academic organisations, which might include industry, charities and public sector research establishments as Full or Associate Partners. Full Partners will form the core decision-making unit of the DTP and be expected to contribute resources and access to studentships as per their agreement. The combined UKRI-BBSRC research income of Full Partners will be counted towards the £20M threshold. Associate Partners will have fewer privileges than Full Partners, but may still contribute some resource or advice as per an individual agreement. UKRI-BBSRC research grant spend from Associate Partners will not count towards the minimum threshold.

Partnerships will be encouraged to include smaller institutions offering centres of excellence in bioscience research, innovation and training. Applications including centres of excellence will be given extra weight in the final studentship allocation process.

Where Associate Partners are named on a DTP application, the Partnership must demonstrate that there is significant added value from their inclusion. This may include (although is not limited to) financial commitments to underwrite a number of studentships or CASE conversions, and/or commitment to cover the costs of access to facilities or training that cannot be otherwise provided by an eligible institution, and/or strategic links to an important stakeholder or user.

Whether an individual Research Organisation or a consortium, Partnerships must show a clear strategy for how they will work to deliver their goals and how they will grow and mature collaborations over the funding period. Proposals must justify their structure, make a clear case for the size of the Partnership, and the added value each Partner brings to the delivery of training and to the doctoral candidate experience. UKRI-BBSRC acknowledge that it may take time for a new collaborative arrangement to fully evolve and for Partnerships to be consolidated, and will direct the assessment panel accordingly.

UKRI-BBSRC expects proposals to include plans for monitoring the success of the collaboration and ensure a consistent offering for all doctoral candidates.

Capacity Building across Core Bioscience Disciplines

Partnerships will be expected to deliver leading edge, frontier bioscience research and innovation training across the remit of UKRI-BBSRC, and address strategic bioscience skills and capacity challenges outlined in the Forward Look for UK Biosciences. There is no expectation that an individual DTP proposal should seek to cover the full range of UKRI-BBSRC’s priorities; Research Organisations are advised to play to their research and innovation strengths and identify bioscience topic areas where they have world-class expertise and infrastructures to develop disciplinary expertise in their doctoral candidates. Where they are seeking to use the DTP to grow capacity in a new research area they must justify their rationale.

DTPs will be expected to enable an appropriate balance of support for frontier bioscience, strategic priorities and areas of skills shortages through the DTP model, and set their own targets.

Applicants will be encouraged to embrace interdisciplinary approaches to bioscience where there is a strategic need for these skills and where the Partnership has the capability to do so. Collaboration between DTPs and other training investments made by UKRI, institutions and other funders will be encouraged to facilitate this interdisciplinarity.

As part of their proposal, Partnerships should explain how they will ensure that the PhD projects fall wholly within UKRI-BBSRC’s remit, and how they will use the Training Grant flexibility to train doctoral candidates.

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2 [https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/forward-look-for-uk-bioscience-pdf/]
candidates across the breadth of bioscience and in response to emerging skills needs. UKRI-BBSRC require applicants to set out how the Partnership will link to and access wider institutional resources, such as other investments in doctoral training, graduate schools, careers service, knowledge exchange facilities etc.

Developing Highly-Skilled and Employable People

UKRI-BBSRC expects Partnerships to provide an excellent postgraduate training environment. Partnerships are expected to describe how they will ensure doctoral candidates will:

- Access and undertake high quality research projects;
- Develop critical and creative thinking and problem solving skills;
- Receive excellent supervision and career development support;
- Receive training and support in applying quantitative and computational techniques (including artificial intelligence and machine learning) to the production, management, analysis and dissemination of research data;
- Develop expertise in experimental design and statistics appropriate to a discipline to ensure research results are robust and reproducible;
- Receive underpinning training relevant to research integrity, ethics and reproducibility;
- Receive training and experience in the communication and engagement of their work with different stakeholders;
- Have access to wider transferable skills development in response to personalised training needs analysis.

UKRI-BBSRC recognises that high-quality supervision is an integral part of developing highly-skilled people, and expects formal systems to be in place for the continuing professional development of supervisory skills for all staff with doctoral supervisory responsibilities.

UKRI-BBSRC welcomes applications describing other innovative models of doctoral training with non-academic partners, including the co-creation of projects and training elements with non-academic organisations, non-bioscience disciplines and other doctoral programmes to meet the objectives of the programme.

Professional Internships and CASE

UKRI-BBSRC will expect all doctoral candidates on a DTP programme to undertake a minimum three month placement, either through the Professional Internships for PhD Students (PIPS) component or through a CASE studentship.

A new feature of DTP3 will be the separate allocation of CASE awards to DTPs assessed on the strength of their industrial collaborations and plans for the development of new collaborations, especially with small and medium-sized enterprises. This will replace the previous method in DTP2, in which CASE was allocated algorithmically in proportion to the number of standard studentships. There is no requirement to convert a proportion of studentships to CASE studentships.

Partnerships will be able to apply for an allocation of standard and collaborative studentships, fully justifying how these studentships will be utilised. The Panel will judge each proposal and make separate recommendations for their allocation to each successful application.

3 https://bbsrc.ukri.org/skills/investing-doctoral-training/case-studentships/
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Inclusivity is a core feature of DTP3. Partnerships are asked to describe their strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to enable the wide participation of doctoral candidates from all backgrounds, and the support systems in place to protect their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This should include the embedding of EDI principles at all levels and in all aspects of research and training practice in the DTP, including the selection and management of doctoral candidates and cohorts, and ensuring EDI principles are embedded as appropriate within research programmes. The plan should consider current good practice to make allowances for career breaks, support for people with caring responsibilities, flexible working and alternative working patterns (please see our Equality and Diversity webpages\(^4\) for further information). As flagship investments, DTPs are expected to take a wider leadership role in driving improved EDI within relevant areas.

Partnerships must describe their strategy and actions in a dedicated EDI plan, as a two-page additional document submitted as part of the proposal documentation. Please see Annex 4 for more information.

Governance of the Partnership

Partnerships will be expected to describe the governance arrangements that will enable effective decision-making and engagement with all relevant stakeholders to deliver the objectives, the arrangements for sharing best practice amongst the Partners and with other DTPs, and how the Partnership will ensure UKRI-BBSRC receives value for money in the delivery of PhD training.

Monitoring Progress and Capturing Impact

The monitoring of progress towards goals and the evidencing of impact are important components of DTP3. This will be conducted in a number of different ways including:

- Annual Reports to UKRI-BBSRC;
- Attending a Mid-term Review meeting to assess the performance of the DTP and to inform UKRI-BBSRC’s decision to release funding for the final two tranches of studentships;
- Researchfish and survey reporting by doctoral candidates;
- Provision of accurate and timely information on doctoral candidates’ projects to UKRI-BBSRC via Je-S Student Details;
- Hosting an annual Partnership visit by UKRI-BBSRC staff and its nominees;
- Good practice sharing events.

Partnerships will be expected to describe what success looks like for their doctoral candidates, how the DTP will deliver this, what evidence they will capture to measure progress and show impact towards their goals, and the process of capturing the data. UKRI-funded doctoral candidates are required to use our nominated online system to provide an annual update of information relating to the outputs, outcomes and impacts arising from their UKRI funded research and training. These updates must be provided during the life of the studentship and for at least three years after the funding has finished. Further information on reporting requirements can be found on the UKRI website\(^5\). UKRI-BBSRC will describe what key information it will require from DTPs in Annual Reports and the Mid-term Review. This will include diversity statistics for doctoral candidate recruitment, financial leveraging, training and development activities offered and examples of doctoral candidate achievements.

UKRI-BBSRC wishes to continue a high level of engagement with successful Partnerships in order to support Research Organisations in their postgraduate work. This will include the Research Organisations

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\(^4\) [https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/equality-diversity/](https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/equality-diversity/)

\(^5\) [https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/research-outcomes1/help-and-guidance/](https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/research-outcomes1/help-and-guidance/)
being able to seek advice on issues which may emerge in their management of the DTP, as well as enable UKRI-BBSRC to provide guidance on emerging skills issues and policy developments. This will take the form of the annual Partnership visit and good practice sharing events.

In submitting a proposal to become a UKRI-BBSRC DTP, the Research Organisations involved thereby agree to comply with monitoring arrangements established by UKRI-BBSRC, and to work in partnership with UKRI-BBSRC to support its priorities for PhD training.

**Flexible Supplement Fund**

The DTP3 programme will include a £500,000 p.a. Flexible Supplement Fund (FSF) to be split across successful applicants. This fund can be used flexibly to support, for example:

- The development of strategically important and vulnerable research skills and capabilities in the biosciences (see Review of Vulnerable Skills and Capabilities6);
- Exceptional training and development opportunities, such as overseas fieldwork,
- Supplementary funds for placements etc.;
- Opportunities to provide training with industry or at the interdisciplinary interface;
- Widening participation activities to address identified discrepancies in the take-up of doctoral opportunities between different social groups, particularly those under-represented in doctoral programmes.

Cross-DTP network building will be a permissible use of this money. The FSF will replace the separate Research Experience Placements and advanced *in vivo* skills training7 budgets from DTP2. FSFs will not be automatically assigned to successful DTP3 proposals; instead, applicants will have the opportunity to bid for an allocation of this funding and the assessment panel will be given the discretion to award a FSF to the best cases for support at a level commensurate with the quality of the plan.

**Costs**

It is important for UKRI-BBSRC to form partnerships with institutions which have a clear and long-term strategy for developing their bioscience research, and where this is backed up by recent, on-going and planned infrastructure investments by the institutions involved. Therefore, in assessing proposals to become DTPs, UKRI-BBSRC will ask its Assessment Panel to take account of the investment that institutions are committed to making in their bioscience research, innovation and training relevant to UKRI-BBSRC’s remit. This may also include the co-funding of additional studentships, a commitment to enhanced training grants or improved access to research facilities.

UKRI-BBSRC welcomes proposals which are able to use UKRI-BBSRC’s investment to leverage additional funding from other sources. The leverage of funding must fit with UKRI-BBSRC’s remit, and is particularly welcome where it supports UKRI-BBSRC’s priority research areas. Where Research Organisations are involved in international partnerships relevant to UKRI-BBSRC’s priorities, proposals may also wish to explain how their PhD training programme may attract international doctoral candidates and investment from international sponsors, bearing in mind UKRI-BBSRC does not permit the funding of doctoral candidates (including international doctoral candidates) on grants.

It is important that all financial and in-kind contributions and their justification are recognised in all proposals.

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7 [https://bbsrc.ukri.org/skills/investing-doctoral-training/strategic-skills/](https://bbsrc.ukri.org/skills/investing-doctoral-training/strategic-skills/)
UKRI-BBSRC will fund the home fees rate and stipend in accordance with UKRI guidelines, and:

- Research Training Support Grant - £5,000 p.a. per candidate
- Fieldwork costs - £230 p.a. per student

Each standard studentship will undertake a three-month PIPS internship during their PhD, to experience working in an area not directly related to their PhD project. To help support the doctoral candidates undertake this PIPS internship, an additional £1000 per doctoral candidate will be provided within the training grant. UKRI-BBSRC CASE doctoral candidates will undertake a placement of between 3 and 18 months with the collaborative industrial training partner. CASE studentships will not attract the additional £1,000 per candidate funding.

Partners will be expected to contribute an appropriate level of administrative resource to manage the programme and gather evidence of impact as required. Match funding of studentships is encouraged, but not mandatory.

**Awards**

Awards will be made in the form of profiled DTP Training Grants to the lead Research Organisation in the proposal. Successful Partnerships will be supported for three cohorts in the first instance, with the final two cohorts’ funding linked to the outcomes of a Mid-term Review.

The cash limit of the grant will be specified and information will be given on the number of studentships this could support. However, the indicative number of studentships given is for guidance only. The flexibility of Training Grant Terms and Conditions means that Research Organisations can seek part-funding from other sources to increase the number of studentships being supported provided they are within UKRI-BBSRC’s remit. Equally, Research Organisations may choose to draw a larger proportion of funds for doctoral candidate experimental work and fund fewer doctoral candidates.

Proposals will need to meet the Statement of Expectations for Postgraduate Training which sets out common principles for the support of all UKRI funded doctoral candidates. Awarded proposals will be subject to UKRI Terms and Conditions as well as any specific UKRI-BBSRC conditions. Applicants are advised to refer to the UKRI Training Grant Guide.

**Assessment**

The assessment of proposals to become UKRI-BBSRC DTPs, which will include an interview with the management team of the proposed Partnership, will be scheduled for late June or July 2019 (date to be confirmed) and announcements regarding the allocation of funding will be made by October 2019. The interview date will be made available on the UKRI-BBSRC website as soon as it is available. The first cohort of doctoral candidates will start in October 2020.

In making its decisions, the Assessment Panel will assess the information provided by applicants as part of their DTP proposal against the objectives of the call and judge the Partnership’s ability to deliver against them. The Panel will also draw on information provided by UKRI-BBSRC on the current research and innovation grant portfolio of the Research Organisations involved in each Partnership.

More information on the assessment criteria for the competition is given in Annex 3.

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8 https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/skills/statementofexpectation-revisedseptember2016v2-pdf/
11 https://bbsrc.ukri.org/skills/investing-doctoral-training/dtp/
How to Apply

Applications should be made by the Lead Research Organisation only.

Institutions are strongly encouraged to read in full the background information provided in order to better address the requirements of the call, including:

- DTP3 main call text
- Annex 1 – Key features of UKRI-BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships
- Annex 2 – UKRI-BBSRC research grant income and eligibility threshold
- Annex 3 – UKRI-BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships assessment criteria

A set of attachments which should be completed for UKRI-BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership applications and uploaded with the Training Grant application are available on the UKRI-BBSRC website, including:

- DTP3 - Cover Letter and Mission Statement
- DTP3 - Portfolio Agreement Attachment
- DTP3 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan Attachment
- DTP3 - Research Funding Attachment
- DTP3 - Performance Indicators Attachment

A set of FAQs accompanying this call will be available on the UKRI-BBSRC website. These will be updated to provide answers to frequently asked questions.

Proposals must be submitted using the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system. The call will be available on Je-S from 14th January 2019. The deadline for receipt of proposals is 4pm on 1st May 2019. Applications will not be accepted following this deadline. Applicants should select the following from the Je-S menus:

- Council: BBSRC
- Document Type: Studentship proposal
- Scheme: Training grants
- Call/Type/Mode: Doctoral Training Partnerships 3rd Call

Document checklist

The table below details the document types which need to be included in the application. Template documents can be found on the UKRI-BBSRC webpage12 and documents must be submitted in this format. Guidelines for completion are found on the template documents.

Documents should be submitted using a minimum Arial 11pt, and you should maintain margins of at least 2cm (left and right).

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12 http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/dtp
Document | Document type in Je-S
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Cover Letter and Mission Statement | Proposal Cover Letter
Portfolio Agreement Attachment | Case for Support
ED&I Attachment | Other Attachment
Research Funding Attachment | Other Attachment
Performance Indicators Attachment | Studentship Proposal Performance Indicators

**Timetable**

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Call Open</td>
<td>14 January 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for Submission of Proposals</td>
<td>1 May 2019 at 16:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel Assessment including Interviews</td>
<td>June/July 2019 (TBC)</td>
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<td>Decision to Applicants</td>
<td>By October 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Cohort of Doctoral Candidates Start</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
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**Further Information**

If you have any queries regarding the completion of the Je-S studentship application form, please contact the Je-S Help Desk:

- **Email:** JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk
- **Phone:** 01793 444164
- **Staffed** Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding Bank holidays and other holidays)

For other queries relating to the requirements of the competition, please contact dtp@bbsrc.ukri.org.