



Education research director opportunity

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£1,250,000
Maximum award:	£1,250,000
Publication date:	13 April 2021
Opening date:	13 April 2021
Closing date:	8 June 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 13 April 2021

Apply for funding to develop and direct ESRC's future research programme on education. This will focus on the role of teachers and technology in learning and teaching.

You must:

- be based at an eligible UK research organisation
- have experience in a similar leadership role
- have experience of building effective relationships between academia, policy and practice
- have a clear vision of how you will deliver this role.

The full economic cost can be up to £1.25 million. We will fund 80% of this.

We will consider joint applications.

The role will start in September 2021. It will last for up to 60 months.

Who can apply

Applicants must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for ESRC funding for the duration of the award.

Joint applications (including job shares) for co-research directors are welcome where a clear division of responsibility is given.

If submitting a joint application, the Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S) application form will require that one of the co-research directors will be listed as principal investigator, the other will need to be listed as co-investigator.

What we're looking for

Education represents a key area of public policy, impacting current and future society, from a local to a global level. While ESRC has used a range of funding mechanisms to fund national and international educational research that spans different sectors and thematic areas, it has been more than twenty years since there was a dedicated ESRC UK-focused research programme in education.

ESRC established a strategic priority for education around improving outcomes in its [2019 delivery plan \(PDF, 7.6MB\)](#).

The funding is intended to support a programme of original research in order to build new, interdisciplinary research capacity focused on two interrelated themes:

- teaching and learning, focusing on teachers, their training, supply and retention
- the technology for teaching and learning, focusing on how students, teachers and carers can improve learning with technology and how teachers' professional development can support it.

To ensure the success of the research programme, ESRC is first seeking to appoint a research director. The research director will provide leadership and strategic direction regarding the development and commissioning, coordination, and potential impact of the research programme.

This is an area in which ESRC is looking to build capacity and the research director will be a key part of connecting ESRC to the education research community, building lasting networks and identifying and promoting key strategic aims for future education research aligned to policy priorities and practice needs within the sector, in order to help shape ESRC's education portfolio.

The research director opportunity will be a five-year (60 months) award starting ahead of the research programme and ending afterwards. This is to ensure that the research director will:

- work closely with the ESRC office, during the initial months of the award, to scope and develop a commissioning opportunity for a three to four years' research programme of awards totaling up to £6.5 million (fEC); the opportunity for these grants will be announced early in 2022
- provide leadership, coordination and add value across the range of the research programme with a view to enhance the programme's scientific, policy, practice,

and societal contributions. This should include:

- strategic oversight of the programme to ensure overall coherence and intellectual leadership
 - identify and lead on engaging with potential research users to ensure that research, where needed, is co-produced with and meets the needs of practitioners, policy makers, and other stakeholders
 - build enduring connections between the research programme, policy and practice through established links with key stakeholders and user communities
 - undertake synthesis, reviews and any other such activities that will add value to the research programme
- act as a ‘thought leader’ beyond the portfolio of investments commissioned through the education priority. This should include:
- act as a key contact point with the authority to speak on the programme’s research and engagement to ESRC senior leadership, key stakeholders, user communities and the media
 - represent education research issues, to both internal and external audiences
 - collaborate with ESRC and UKRI to ensure the future sustainability and growth of the programme’s impact activity via the establishment of co-funding partnerships and other such opportunities within and outside the UKRI environment.

The successful applicant must demonstrate:

- relevant experience in shaping and successfully leading a research programme or related research endeavours, in teaching and learning in compulsory education focusing on the role of teachers and/or the role of technology for teaching and learning – if this is a joint application for co-research directors, this information should be provided for both
- a thorough understanding of the education research landscape in the UK and internationally and an excellent track record of building effective relationships between academia, policy and practice including commitment to interdisciplinary collaborations – if this is a joint application for co-research directors, this information should be provided for both
- a clear vision of how they will use their role as research director to help to deliver on the aspects described as above including how they plan to work with the ESRC office in the first months of their award to develop an opportunity for the research programme – if this is a joint application for co-research directors, a clear division of responsibility should be provided.

Overall funding for the research director role and related activity is £1.25 million (100% FEC).

Of this funding, up to £750,000 should cover the following costs:

- research director at ~0.4 FTE plus associated estates and indirects
- support staff up to a total of ~1.0 FTE across posts plus estates and indirects
- directly incurred costs, for example, leadership and coordination activities including an advisory expert group to the programme, travel and subsistence, arranging meetings, workshops or seminars.

Please note that ESRC will contribute 80% of costs.

Applicants are permitted a degree of flexibility in the funds that they request but should contact the ESRC office using the contact details at the end of this document to discuss any significant deviations from the above.

The remaining £500,000 (100% fEC) will be available as a flexible fund for the research director to distribute for related activity, original research or research synthesis, to respond to emerging research questions arising from the research programme with a focus on partnerships, co-production and impact. Justification for this fund is not required in the justification for resources section of the proposal. However, the case for support should outline proposals for how the research director will work with ESRC to put in a place a clear process for the governance and distribution of funds.

It is expected that the grant should start on 6 September 2021. This is to allow time for the director, in collaboration with the ESRC office, to develop the specifics of a research opportunity for ESRC to commission the programme.

The opportunity for the research programme will open for applications early in 2022 so that following peer review and panel assessment, the research grants will start by autumn 2022. The ESRC office will manage the commissioning activity of the research programme, from beginning to end. At this stage, it is envisaged that the programme will be made up of a small cluster of research grants, to a total value of £6.5 million (100% fEC) with ESRC contributing 80% of the costs.

The research programme will span the areas of the education research priority as set out in the 2019 ESRC delivery plan and the director will work closely with the ESRC office, during the autumn of 2021, to define the vision and focus of the research programme and provide expert advice to the office during its commissioning.

To avoid conflicts of interest, the research director will not be permitted to apply, or be involved in applications for funding under the future research programme that they will be coordinating. This restriction only applies to the research director and does not apply to other individuals at their institution.

The research director will continue to be eligible to apply under other UKRI funding opportunities which are not linked to the research programme that they will be coordinating, including to responsive mode schemes and opportunities under other initiatives. Where further funding is sought from UKRI the research director's total time commitment on UKRI grants cannot exceed 100% of their total contracted hours.

Including impact in research grant proposals

ESRC expects applicants to consider the potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research, with outputs, dissemination and impact a key part of the criteria for most peer review and assessment processes.

It is important therefore to set out how you intend to identify and actively engage relevant users of the research and stakeholders (within and beyond the academic

community including, for instance, the public sector, private sector, civil society or the wider public in general) and include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant end users.

You should articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of these users and consider ways for the proposed research to meet or impact upon these needs.

The proposal should also outline how the legacy of proposed activity will be managed to engage beneficiaries and increase the likelihood of its impact in providing lasting value to participants, stakeholders and the wider social science community.

Opportunities for making an impact may arise, and should be taken, at any stage during the research lifecycle: the planning and research design stage; the period of funding; and all activities that relate to the project up to – and including – the time when funding has ended.

The research lifecycle therefore includes knowledge exchange and impact realisation activities – including reporting and publication, and the archiving, future use, sharing, and linking of data. It is important that researchers have in place a robust strategy for maximising the likelihood of impact opportunities and their own capacity for taking advantage of these.

To be effective, all communication, engagement and impact activities must be planned in detail and properly resourced in the proposal. Throughout the relevant sections of the research proposal, applicants should therefore actively consider how these impacts can be maximised and developed. Further information about how impact should be considered in the proposal can be found in the Je-S guidance document.

Applicants should note the following: [COVID-19 guidance for applicants: accounting for the unknown impacts of COVID-19](#).

How to apply

You should prepare and submit your proposal using the research councils' [Je-S system](#).

ESRC must receive your application by 16:00 on 8 June 2021.

When applying, select 'new document' then:

- council: ESRC
- document type: Standard Proposal
- scheme: Research Grants
- call/type/mode: 'Education Research Director 2021'
- start date: 6 September 2021.

After completing the application you must click 'submit document', which will send your application to your host organisation's administration. Your host organisation's

administration is required to complete the submission process. You should allow sufficient time for your organisation's submission process between submitting your proposal to them and the opportunity closing date.

Document guidance

As well as the Je-S application form, the following documents must be submitted.

Case for support

Up to a maximum of six sides of A4 to demonstrate:

- a thorough understanding of the education research landscape in the UK and internationally and an excellent track record of building effective relationships between academia, policy and practice including commitment to interdisciplinary collaborations (one A4 page)
- relevant experience in shaping and successfully leading a research programme or related research endeavours, within the thematic areas of the “education: improving outcomes” priority, which include teaching and learning in compulsory education focusing on the role of teachers and/or the role of technology for teaching and learning (two A4 pages)
- a clear vision of how they will utilise their role as research director to help to deliver the various aspects of their role as detailed above including how they plan to work with the ESRC office in the first months of their award to develop an opportunity for the research programme and an initial proposal for how the flexible funding could be used to enhance the research programme. (three A4 pages)

Justification of resources

Up to two sides of A4.

This should be a two-page narrative description of the need for the resources requested. Please ensure you justify all of the resources you request. See our [guidance for writing the justification of resources document](#).

CVs

CV (maximum of two sides of A4 per person).

A CV for the principal investigator (and another one for the co-director if this is a joint application) must be included. This should include, as appropriate, contact details, qualifications (including class and subject), academic and professional posts held since graduation, academic responsibilities, experience of project management, a summary list of the most relevant and recent publications. This document should not exceed two A4 sides.

Other attachments

Head of department statement (maximum of two sides of A4).

The head of department at the principal investigator's institution must complete a statement supporting and approving the application.

Please see Je-S guidance attachment for more information on process.

How we will assess your application

All applications will be assessed and shortlisted by an independent panel consisting of expert academic and user members drawn from the education research communities.

Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to an interview, which will be conducted via video conference, in mid-July 2021.

Further information on the format of the interview will be provided to shortlisted candidates, at least two weeks prior to their interview.

The panel will assess applications against the following criteria:

- fit with remit of opportunity
- quality and experience of the applicant (and co-director, if this is a joint application) in relation to the expectations of the role
- understanding of the requirements and a clear vision of how they will successfully deliver the different aspects of their role
- inclusion of appropriate resources and expertise
- where this is a joint application, the panel will also consider how clear and appropriate the division of responsibilities is.

All applicants will receive written feedback. Please note that there will be no principle investigator response stage in this opportunity.

UKRI supports the [San Francisco declaration on research assessment \(DORA\)](#) and recognise the relationship between research assessment and research integrity.

Contact details

Please send queries to: esrceeducationresearchpriority@esrc.ukri.org.

For help and advice on costings and writing your proposal please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

Any queries regarding the submission of proposals through Je-S should be directed to:

Je-S helpdesk
jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org
01793 444164

Additional info

Supporting documents

- [Je-S guidance \(PDF, 283KB\)](#)
 - [Equality impact assessment \(PDF, 225KB\)](#)
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Timeline

