**Centre for Doctoral Training Plus (CDT+) in Behavioural Research**
**Peer Reviewer Guidance**

**Introduction**

These notes provide guidance on reviewing proposals received under the Centre for Doctoral Training Plus (CDT+) in Behavioural Research Call.

Before you begin your assessment please read:
- the specification for this call
- ESRC's Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022
- frequently asked questions

**Background to the Doctoral Training Network**

In 2017, the ESRC established a national network of 14 institutional and consortia level Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) and two Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) through which we deliver our funding for postgraduate training across the full disciplinary range of the social sciences, as well as areas of interdisciplinary research at the boundaries with other sciences.

Over the last few years we have commissioned a number of reviews and evidence gathering exercises including the Review of the PhD in the Social Sciences, Data-Driven Research Skills Scoping Review and Strengthening the role of the TNA Report. These have since informed the development of our strategy to support doctoral training and the key findings of these activities emphasised:
- The student must be at the centre of the training process
- Training should reflect both the needs of the individual and of their discipline/interdisciplinary area or field of study
- The importance of a holistic, evidence-based development needs analysis in determining the training and development students receive
- The importance of innovation in core training content and delivery, particularly in relation to data management, digital skills and the skills to analyse large and complex data
- The importance of 'Research in Practice' as a core component of the doctoral experience for all ESRC funded students, including the need for placement opportunities for all
- The need to consider broadly how students' training needs can be met through opportunities to source specialist training from other providers, including the National Centre for Research Methods, ESRC investments, other appropriate training providers or by working in partnership with other organisations.

To deliver our new vision for postgraduate research, the ESRC postgraduate training and development guidelines have been updated to reflect these key findings and place a stronger focus on postgraduate researchers (PGRs) being at the centre of training provision and the importance of a robust, ongoing and evidence-based training and development needs analysis for all PGRs.

**A National Capability for Behavioural Research**

The CDT+ is part of an overall £18 million ESRC investment, over the next five years, to create a new national capability for behavioural research through a 'hub and spoke' model.

The aim of the national capability is to harness, connect, and extend the UK's existing capacity and capability in behavioural research and support the mobilisation of research into policy and practice. There was a separate call to develop a £12.15 million 'hub' that will connect stakeholders and drive interdisciplinary innovation in behavioural research, which will sit at the heart of this 'hub and spoke' model.

The hub will then be complemented by a series of 'spokes' (or centres of excellence) that will be established over time to deliver key elements of the national capability. The first spoke will be this CDT+ in Behavioural Research.

This investment will complement and build upon existing expertise and resources by creating a new national infrastructure that enables the rapid exchange of evidence and advice on a broad range of research questions, as well as facilitate the exchange of people. This investment is also a response to the fragmentation of academic research and government research needs. The investment will have a strong focus on research methods and bring together a suite of approaches (from data science and human-centred design to evaluation methods), which currently sit across a wide variety of disciplines, to enable interdisciplinary approaches to a range of important behavioural research questions.

It is important to ESRC that behavioural research is not seen to be the only way in which social science can contribute to government policy making, and this investment should identify ways to champion and support the broader contributions of social science whilst focusing its activities on interdisciplinary behavioural research.

The key objectives of this national capability are to:

1. facilitate evidence-based decision making through timely, high impact, and independent research on human behaviour that meets the needs of policymakers, industry, and civil society
2. build a critical mass of interdisciplinary researchers with the knowledge and skills to transform our understanding of human behaviour by applying a diverse range of relevant methods.

We take a broad definition of what 'behavioural research' encompasses which goes beyond individualistic approaches to behaviour change. Our definition includes research to answer fundamental questions about how and why people, organisations and groups behave in the way they do within wider societal and economic contexts. We expect a broad range of disciplinary perspectives, within the social sciences and beyond, to be involved in the investment. Outputs from the investment will be targeted towards addressing major societal and economic challenges.

Speaking to the second core objective of this National Capability, the first spoke will be this CDT+ in behavioural research, that will develop the next generation of PhD graduates, early career researchers and provide relevant training to non-academics.

**Aims and objectives of the CDT+**

Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) aim to provide training in focused, thematic, interdisciplinary research areas. The purpose of a CDT is to pump-prime the development and delivery of training in new and emerging areas. The principal objective of this call is to establish a Centre for Doctoral Training Plus (CDT+) in Behavioural Research.

The CDT+ aims to boost the interdisciplinary nature and innovative potential of Behavioural Research through a variety of interventions in order to address a broad spectrum of capacity needs for a wide range of audiences. Therefore, the CDT+ expands on the standard CDT model focused on doctoral training, with an early career researcher (ECR) fellowship scheme and a programme of additional training and development opportunities. Applicants will be expected to develop training in behavioural research, whilst also meeting our expectations for supporting doctoral training as detailed in the Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines.

The CDT+ is expected to build a critical mass of interdisciplinary researchers with the knowledge and skills to transform our understanding of human behaviour and inform policy and practice. The broader aims of this CDT+ reflect the need to support the uptake of behavioural research methods and findings in local and national decision making, and to ensure graduates, Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and broader audiences, have the skills they need to work across disciplinary and sector boundaries (for example, government, academic, and industry, and within and across social sciences).

Therefore, interventions need to address a broad spectrum of capacity needs for a wide range of audiences and the CDT+ will comprise of three core components:

(1) **a doctoral programme** that will produce a new generation of PhD graduates that:
  - can apply a diverse range of research methods, producing research that addresses the needs of policymakers, business, public and civil society.
  - have strong capabilities across a conceptually broad range of fields relevant to the understanding of human behaviour, including but not limited to, having strong foundations in methodological innovation and an understanding data relevant to the field
  - have the skills to work fluently and confidently across disciplinary and sector boundaries
(2) **an early career fellowship scheme** that will:
  - be developed in a way that best meets the needs of ECRs
  - support and encourage ECRs to develop the knowledge and skills required to pursue a career in behavioural research accelerating the development of a critical mass of researchers in the field
  - provide ECRs with the opportunity to undertake a varied programme of activities supporting their continued development for careers both within and outside of academia
(3) **a programme of additional training and development opportunities:**
  - designed flexibly to support the participation of researchers in government and social researchers in other sectors where there is mutual benefit
  - accessible to different audiences and stakeholders through a sustainable cost recovery strategy aligned with the wider CDT+ strategy and broader investment to develop a national capability in behavioural research

**Assessment Process:**

Applicants should provide evidence and demonstrate excellence in the following areas:

  - working in partnership
  - content and delivery of training:
    - studentships
      - conceptual, general and specialist research training
      - research in practice
      - collaborative studentships and international engagement
      - development needs analysis
      - supervision
    - early career researchers
    - training beyond academia
  - equality, diversity and inclusion
  - delivery, management and governance (including monitoring progress and capturing impact)
  - allocation of studentships and fellowships

All proposals will undergo peer review before being considered by a specially convened panel.

Each proposal will be sent to a minimum of six reviewers for expert comment. Reviewers will normally receive a maximum of two proposals to assess. Peer reviewers are invited to provide an assessment on the quality of postgraduate provision, and the supporting research and administration environment; but also, the approach to boost the interdisciplinary nature and innovative potential of behavioural research by developing and delivering specialist training in focused thematic interdisciplinary research areas across a broad range of interventions.

Peer reviewers will be expected to provide an independent assessment for each individual proposal allocated to them.

Applicants will be offered an opportunity to respond to anonymised reviewer comments, which will then be sent to members of the panel along with the proposal and reviewer comments for consideration.  This will inform the second stage of the assessment process, which will be undertaken by a panel.

Proposals of a sufficiently high-quality level will progress to the panel stage, where a specially convened panel will prioritise applicants to invite to interview and subsequently interview the shortlisted applicants. The shortlisted CDT+ Directors, and up to three other members of their teams, will be invited to interview.

The panel will then independently assess the proposals informed by the peer reviewers' assessments and through the interviews, assign the final grades and make funding recommendations to ESRC.

**Conflict of interest**

It is vital that all reviewers are seen to be completely impartial at all stages of the review process.  ESRC aims to ensure that proposals are not forwarded to you for review where there is an obvious conflict of interest, however, not all conflicts are obvious from the information we have available. Reviewers should not assess proposals with which they have a conflict of interest with the applicant(s) or any of the Research Organisation(s) comprising the CDT+.

Peer reviewers cannot have been in any way involved in the development of the CDT+ proposals (including as Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, or Project Partner) as this would be a conflict of interest.

Institutional conflicts will be considered when applications are allocated to reviewers. If you have a personal or professional conflict of interest with an individual on an application that you are allocated, please let us know as soon as possible in order for us to reallocate that proposal.

If you think you may have a conflict of interest with a proposal you've been allocated, please contact us before proceeding with the review on pgtframework@esrc.ukri.org

Further guidance on avoiding conflicts between a reviewer's personal interests and those of ESRC to ensure the integrity of funding decisions can be found here.

**Confidentiality**

As a reviewer, you are not allowed to disclose to outsiders any information concerning application documents or evaluations, nor are you allowed to use this confidential information to your own benefit or anyone else's benefit or disadvantage. In addition, you may not reveal to outsiders that you are assessing the postgraduate training plans of particular research organisations.

In order to ensure a fully independent assessment of applications, reviewers should note that they **must not** discuss their comments with other peer reviewers.  If reviewers have any questions regarding procedural details or more specific questions on the grading criteria they are asked to contact the ESRC directly.

Once the assessment has been completed, you are required to destroy/delete all of the proposal documents and any copies made of them. Confidentiality must also be maintained after the assessment process has been completed.

**Deadlines**

We appreciate you have a busy schedule, however a timely response would really be appreciated. If the deadline for comments is not feasible, please contact pgtframework@esrc.ukri.org as soon as possible as we might be able to agree another suitable date.

If you are unable to review the proposal, please decline the Je-S invite as soon as possible to enable the team to select an alternative reviewer.

All reviews must be completed by **Wednesday 19 April 2023**.

**Timetable for assessment**

We anticipate sharing proposals, including supporting documentation, with reviewers the week commencing 27 March 2023.

Written comments and grades must be completed using the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submissions System (Je-S) by **Wednesday 19 April 2023**.  Earlier return of assessments would also be welcome.

Reviewer comments will be anonymised and sent to applicants for response. Applicants will have a deadline of 12 May 2023 to supply their response to the comments.

The panel will review all of the documentation and will meet on the 22 or 23 June 2023 to shortlist applications. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview on the 13 July 2023 and decisions will be communicated in September 2023 with the first cohort of students starting in October 2024.

**Timetable:**

| Proposals and supporting documents sent to reviewers | Week commencing 27 March 2023 |
|---|---|
| Deadline for Peer Review comments and grades | 19 April 2023 |
| Deadline for applicant response to comments | 12 May 2023 |
| Commissioning Panel meeting | 22 or 23 June 2023 |
| Interviews | 13 July 2023 |
| Communicate decisions | September 2023 |

**Peer Review form on Je-S**

You will be invited to undertake your review through the research councils Joint Electronic Submissions System (Je-S). You will be asked to complete a brief section on your knowledge of the applicant and to allocate a grade on a number of categories.

You will then be asked to allocate an overall grade for the proposal and provide detailed comments in support of this grade. Please ensure that your overall grade reflects your written comments.

Please refer to the **Je-S Helptext for reviewers** for further guidance regarding the Je-S system and the general peer review process: Je-S Handbook (rcuk.ac.uk)**.**

The review criteria for this funding opportunity (detailed below) should also be used to help inform the grading of, and detailed comments relating to the proposal.

**Reviewer Guidance**

The guidance notes for reviewers should be read in conjunction with the CDT+ call specification and the Postgraduate Training Development Guidelines 2022 (hereafter referenced as the Guidelines 2022).

Reviewers should particularly note the following information regarding eligibility.

**Eligibility**

All UK-based research organisations that are eligible to receive research council funding for research and have the infrastructure in place to deliver postgraduate training will be eligible to submit a proposal.

We welcome proposals from both single research organisations and consortia, but organisations are only allowed to lead one CDT+ proposal. They may also participate in consortia arrangements led by other organisations where the proposed training provision supports the aims of the initiative and can be fully justified.

There is no limit on the number of research organisations which can be involved in consortia arrangements, but they must ensure that the students and fellows are managed and supported to interact together as a cohort and the make-up of the partnership must be fully justified as part of the application.

Non-academic organisations, such as those from business, civil-society, and public sector, can form part of consortia bids for the delivery of training. However, all partners are expected to contribute resources and access for the delivery of training development opportunities.

Research and partner organisations in a CDT+ will be expected to demonstrate full commitment to the partnerships in which they are involved. The ESRC will scrutinise each proposal to ensure that the eligibility criteria are met. However, peer reviewers are also asked to be vigilant about eligibility and to raise any queries they have about aspects of individual proposals with the office. If you have any have any doubts regarding eligibility, please contact: pgtframework@esrc.ukri.org

**Proposal Documents**

Peer reviewers will be asked to review all of the information provided within the proposal; however, the main detail of each proposal will be found in the following documentation:
- **Case for support** – a structured narrative addressing the criteria set out in the call specification and the Guidelines 2022. The case for support will be supported by four annexes as follows:
  - **Annex 1: Research Environment** - This should include outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) (metrics for output, environment and impact), supervisory capacity, completion rates, major grant funding or centres of excellence and other indicators that applicants consider demonstrate the quality of the research environment.
  - **Annex 2: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan** - should detail how the CDT+ will address EDI considerations, capture diversity data, support career progression, provide support systems to protect individual's physical and mental health and how the approaches will be developed over the lifetime of the CDT+ and good practices shared.
  - **Annex 3: Delivery and Governance -** should provide a clear case for the structure and size of the CDT+, a strategy for working with government and other sectors, clear communication plans, and approach for linking with their ROs institutional strategy, as well as developing future collaborations and complementing and enhancing existing capacity building investments. The CDT+ should also confirm their commitment to working the leadership team for the behavioural research 'hub'.
  - **Annex 4: Management and Reporting** – should indicate what evidence they will capture to measure progress and show impact towards their goals, and the process of capturing the data, including to demonstrate the sustainability of the CDT+ beyond ESRC's investment and what success looks like for their doctoral candidates, early career fellows and wider audiences/stakeholders.
- **CV (for the proposed Director, Deputy Director and Training Lead)** – each proposal will include a CV for the proposed director, deputy director and training lead.
- **Justification of Resources** – a statement providing a breakdown and justification of the costs being requested for the component parts of the CDT+, noting the structures and processes needed to develop the ECR fellowship scheme, training and development beyond studentships, leadership and management costs, and the post to be embedded within the Government Skills and Curriculum Unit (GSCU).

- **Additional information for collaborative bids (if applicable)** – proposals must articulate a clear case for the size of the consortia, each collaborating organisation's participation in it and the added value of the consortia approach. Proposals should set out details of the partnership, which includes the rationale for the collaboration, the perceived benefits of the collaboration, its history, the governance structure for the arrangement and how the collaboration will mature over the accreditation period.
- **Letters of support from collaborating organisations** – each collaborating organisation must provide a letter of support detailing the organisation's commitment, the alignment with the organisation(s) strategy and their contribution towards an appropriate management structure for the CDT+.
- **Project Partner Letter of support (if applicable)** – Each project partner contributing to the co-creation and co-design of the CDT+ must provide a letter of support confirming the level of support specific to this proposal, including the benefits, appropriateness and strength of the partnership(s) and detailing of any in-kind contribution(s) and what it will be.

## Assessment Criteria

The primary role of Peer Reviewers is to determine how well the proposal to establish a CDT+ in Behavioural Research meets the requirements set out in the call specification, as well as our broader expectation for postgraduate training as set out in the Guidelines 2022.

The assessment criteria detailed below are to be used when reviewing the proposal(s).

Please use the free text 'Feedback for Applicant' section of the review form to comment on each of the following:

## Working in partnership

The CDT+ needs to support innovative training that will ensure graduates, ECRs and broader audiences, have the skills they need to work across disciplinary and sector boundaries (for example, government, academic, and industry, and within and across social sciences).We expect the CDT+ to be led by research leaders in the field and by a team that will bring fresh perspectives to behavioural research and demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the variety of disciplines and methodological approaches that can contribute to our understanding of behaviour. Applicants must also demonstrate that the students and ECRs will be based within a high quality and supportive research environment.

Reviewers are asked to consider if the bid demonstrates evidence of the following:
- A clear CDT+ vision and how the CDT+ will deliver their goals
- justification of the partners involved in consortia arrangements including how any potential fragmentation within research organisations will be minimised
- evidence of quality of research environment in behavioural research, how the CDT+ will be resourced, the suitability of the leadership team and partnership and engagement, specifically collaborating with non-academic partners, including details and justification for the structure and size of the partnership
- evidence of linkage to institutional strategies and resources including other ESRC investments
- commitment to working with the Leadership Team for the Behavioural Research 'Hub' to achieve the overarching aims of the investment.
- how the partnership will grow and mature collaborations over the funding period.

*Points to consider:*

Applications can be submitted by either single institutions or consortia and reviewers are asked to comment on the justification for the approach taken by the applicant(s).

The ESRC would expect consortia bids for the CDT+ to ensure that their strategy and vision is as one and not a summary of the separate institutional strategies. Reviewers are advised to raise any concerns they have about the coherence of individual strategies.

Peer reviewers are also asked to consider how well the CDT+ has been embedded within their ROs vision and goals, particularly the strategy for social science research. For consortia bids, the ESRC expects different research organisations' strategy and vision for the CDT+ to be aligned. Reviewers are advised to raise any concerns they have about the coherence of the research organisations' strategies.

ESRC acknowledges that it may take time for new collaborative arrangements to evolve fully and for partnerships to be consolidated or extended. Reviewers should consider whether consortia bids have provided demonstrable evidence of initial collaborative activity for training provision and set out a clear strategy for how the collaboration will grow and mature over the funding period.

Non-academic organisations, such as those from business, civil-society, and public sector research establishments, may also form part of consortia bids, in agreement with the lead research organisation submitting the proposal. They would be expected to contribute resources (cash or in kind) for the delivery of training and access for the delivery of training. Reviewers are asked to determine whether the added value of their inclusion has been demonstrated.

Please note, applicant(s) were asked only to provide Letters of Support for collaborating organisations or nominated project partners where the applicant(s) had secured a substantial commitment from a non-academic organisation that would form part of the consortia bid for the delivery of training, where they have clearly contributed to the co-creation and co-design of the CDT+ and their involvement would enhance the quality of the training provided; or, where they are contributing to the two additional studentships per year that must be funded from non-RO sources. Therefore, there may be letters referenced in the application that have been removed as they did not specifically address these points.

*Grading*

Reviewers are asked to indicate the grade in which they have allocated to this section (Working in Partnership) using the grading structure 0 to 6.

**Content and delivery of training**

The CDT+ needs to address a broad spectrum of capacity needs for a wide range of audiences, as such, the CDT+ will comprise of three core components, a doctoral programme, an ECR fellowship scheme and a programme of additional training and development opportunities.

- **Studentships**

  The CDT+ will be expected to establish a doctoral programme that will produce a new generation of PhD graduates with skills to apply a diverse range of research methods, producing research that addresses the needs of policymakers, business, and civil

society; to work fluently and confidently across disciplinary and sector boundaries; and with strong capabilities across a conceptually broad range of fields relevant to the understanding of human behaviour.

The CDT+ must provide an excellent postgraduate training environment and deliver leading edge social science research training which is student centred and responsive to their prior experience and subject area.

Reviewers are asked to consider whether the applicant(s) have outlined:
- approach to developing new training and evidence of the strengths in providing training and clear details on the infrastructure needed to underpin the delivery of these options
- details of how they will meet our expectations for the delivery of core conceptual, general and specialist research training within the CDT+
- examples of where the CDT+ would make specialist training available beyond the CDT+
- strategy for how the CDT+ will deliver research in practice placements ensuring a suite of options that are open to all ESRC funded students
- details on how the research in practice element will link up with the development needs analysis process and how the CDT+ will identify the needs of the students and ensure the suite of options available is appropriate
- evidence of the partnerships commitment to develop collaborative agreements with non-academic partnerships
- strategy for meeting our expectations in relation to development needs analysis and supervision
- approach to ensure students benefit from being part of a cohort

***Points to consider***:

Applicant(s) must set out the importance of the substantive area of enquiry, the key skills they are seeking to develop, and the types of projects students will be undertaking. The CDT+ should justify the training platforms they will provide. Reviewers are asked to comment on how the CDT+ will enable delivery of the most effective training in behavioural research to build a critical mass of interdisciplinary researchers, enhancing our national capability to transform our understanding of human behaviour. The CDT+ should have plans in place to continuously review and identify training gaps within the CDT+ and how these gaps would be addressed

Whilst the CDT+ is expected to develop training in behavioural research, applicants must still address the expectations for core conceptual, general and specialist social science research training detailed in the Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022. Training should be delivered flexibly and tailored to the needs of the student and their project. They should also indicate where they will be able to make specialist training available beyond the CDT+.

The CDT+ must demonstrate that students and ECRs will be based within a high-quality research environment and reviewers are asked to consider whether the applicant(s) have provided evidence of their quality for the research environment.

Research in Practice is the broad ambition to have a suite of options to develop students' abilities, tailored through the Development Needs Analysis (DNA) process according to a student's previous experience, goals and development needs. Reviewers are asked to review the range of development opportunities included in the bid and consider how they recognise and promote the diversity of careers open to students, recognise the diversity

of the student body and place an emphasis on experiential, immersive and reflexive learning opportunities.

The development needs analysis (DNA) process and is fundamental to achieving more flexible and responsive doctoral training. Reviewers are asked to consider whether the approach to the DNA process meets the ESRC expectations for a more holistic process to allow a bespoke student experience to be created and how student's will be able to participate in a range of opportunities throughout their period of study, tailored through their DNA according to their previous experience, goals and development needs. Reviewer should also consider how the CDT+ will ensure consistency across the partners.

ESRC is keen to positively encourage collaborations between business, public and civil society sector organisations to help maximise the wider impact of our training investments. Reviewers are asked to consider if the applicants have demonstrated a commitment to develop collaborative agreements with non-academic partnerships, including how this offering would be developed by the partnership over the lifecourse of the award. Collaborative studentships can also include a placement as part of the opportunity.

It is a requirement of the funding for at least two students per cohort to be supported by non-academic partner(s). Reviewers are asked to consider whether the applicants have demonstrated a convincing strategy for securing additional funding to support two studentships per annum, but also for longevity and potential scalability of the CDT+.

Our renewed vision for postgraduate training also aims to ensure that social science graduates remain at the forefront internationally and to develop globally competitive social science researchers. Applicant(s) are encouraged to highlight the international aspects of their training provision in their proposals, drawing particular attention to aspects which develop the cultural and methodological skills required for working with international partners. Reviewers may wish to highlight any international aspects of the training provision.

Supervisors play a critical role throughout the doctoral experience, and we want to support and promote high quality supervision through the CDT+. It is essential that supervisors are engaged with the CDT+ to ensure that the student gets the most out of their ESRC studentship and the range of opportunities available to them. Reviewers are asked to look at the CDT+ approach to the training and development of supervisors to ensure that the centre will support the supervisors ongoing professional development, whether this be for new or inexperienced supervisors, or those who are more experienced. The CDT+ should have a clear strategy for communicating and engaging with supervisors to ensure that they are fully engaged with the aims and objectives of the CDT+ and how the CDT+ will encourage members of staff to join supervisory teams. Reviewers are also asked to highlight any unusual or unconvincing arrangements for the supervision of postgraduate students.

It is expected that ROs will have the mechanisms in place to promote appropriate integration of training for all students to ensure they are integrated within the cohort and reviewers should look for evidence that the CDT+ can develop a strong cohort identity across all students.

- **Early career researchers (ECR)**

A core aim of the CDT+ is to accelerate the development of a critical mass of researchers in the area of behavioural research. Therefore, the CDT+ is expected to develop a fellowship scheme to support and encourage ECRs to develop the knowledge and skills required to pursue a career in behavioural research.

Applicants have the flexibility to develop the specific fellowship offer in a way that they think best meets the needs of ECRs and the aim of the overarching CDT+. This includes the length of funding available, the fellow's time commitment, and the balance between activities such as new research and other development activities.

Reviewers are asked to consider whether applicants have:
- detailed an appropriate approach to administering an ECR fellowship scheme, including scale and scope of the fellowship scheme, demand management and advertisement and promotion of the scheme
- identified the infrastructure needed to underpin the delivery of the scheme
- explained how they will support the careers of researchers at this career stage and exit strategy from this career stage, recognising a variety of career trajectories
- provided plans for cohort development with other fellows at the research organisation and across partners (for example, induction events)

*Points to consider:*

Reviewers are asked to consider whether the proposed fellowship scheme will provide ECRs with the opportunity to undertake a varied programme of activities supporting their continued development for careers both within and outside of academia.

This should also encourage fellows to participate in supervisory teams as part of their development programmes, undertake placements and have access to wider training opportunities across the CDT+.

Applicants have also been encouraged to explore the potential for co-funded fellowships where the fellow will develop a programme of work in partnership with co-funder. For example, fellows would work collaboratively with the partner organisations during the fellowship, undertaking research that directly supports the partner organisation. This is not a requirement of the funding, but reviewers may wish to highlight in their comments any examples of this.

- **Training beyond academia**

The CDT+ aims to provide innovative training not only through studentships and fellowships, but also a programme of training and development activities for broader audiences. This should enable the participation of researchers in government, and other sectors, for mutual benefit, and supports the uptake of behavioural research findings and methods in local and national decision making.

The programme must be designed flexibly to build capacity and develop researchers' skills to work across disciplinary and sector boundaries, for example, government, academic, and industry, and within and across social sciences.

Reviewers are asked to consider whether applicants have outlined:
- a planned programme of activities and how the CDT+ will ensure it is opened up and accessible to participants across the UK

- a strategy for securing co-funding from external partners for mutual benefit
- details of how they will work closely with government and other key stakeholders, including business, in developing their programme of activity
- how this fits with the wider CDT+ strategy and broader investment to develop a national capability in behavioural research.

### *Points to consider:*

Interventions need to address a broad spectrum of capacity needs for a wide range of audiences, but the programme of activity must align with the wider CDT+ strategy and broader investment to develop a national capability in behavioural research. Reviewers are asked to ensure that applicants have justified how the wider training offer beyond studentships and fellowships will support innovative training for mutual benefit that will support the uptake of behavioural research methods and findings in local and national decision making, and ensure individuals have the skills they need to work across disciplinary and sector boundaries.

The broader aims of this CDT+, the success and scale of the CDT+ will depend on the active support and participation of a wide range of key stakeholders. ESRC engaged closely with government stakeholders in developing this funding opportunity and we require applications to include a post that will be embedded within the Government Skills and Curriculum Unit (GSCU) in the Cabinet Office. Reviewers are also asked to consider how the GSCU role will complements the skills and experience of the CDT+ Director and wider team to help catalyse the development of the CDT+, the exchange of knowledge and people between the research community and government; and how they will be able to work independently and demonstrate leadership across large and complex environments.

Applicants should have considered what additional resources will be required to support to the broader aims of the CDT+ beyond doctoral training, but should also set out an approach to developing a sustainable cost recovery strategy for government (and beyond) participation in the CDT+ training offer, especially for the development and inclusion of apprenticeship or masters level courses.

Reviewers are asked to check that the CDT+ has been appropriately resourced and their plans for how the wider training offer beyond studentships and fellowships will be accessed by wider stakeholders on a sustainable basis.

### *Grading*

Reviewers are asked to indicate the grade in which they have allocated to this section (Content and delivery of training including studentships, fellowships and training beyond academia) using the grading structure 0 to 6.

## Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

ESRC is committed to increasing the diversity of our student and research community and ensuring that we provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all. ESRC investments are expected to take a leading role in promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and should act as a beacon for EDI within the research and training community.

Applicants must set out their strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to support participation of individuals from all backgrounds, as well as details of the support systems in place to protect and promote physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Reviewers are asked to consider whether applicants have provided:
- clear equality, diversity and inclusion plan to support the participation of all doctoral candidates and fellows from all backgrounds, including how they will embed EDI principles at all levels and in all aspects of research and training practice within the CDT+
- evidence of support systems in place to protect students' and fellows' physical and mental health and wellbeing
- confirmation that all institutions within the CDT+ will have procedures in place that allow them to capture EDI data on all applicants, for each stage of the recruitment process, from the outset of the CDT+.

***Points to consider:***

Reviewers are asked to comment on how EDI will be embedded across the CDT+ and whether applicants have set out how they will develop, monitor and adapt their approach over the course of the funding period.

ESRC requires the CDT+ to  collect socio-economic data based on the measures set out by the **Social Mobility Commission** as part of the wider EDI data collection and reviewers are asked to highlight where applicants do not have procedures in place to collect this information.

*Grading*

Reviewers are asked to indicate the grade in which they have allocated to this section (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) using the grading structure 0 to 6.


**Delivery, management, and governance**

ESRC is looking for applicants to articulate how the CDT+ will be managed, what support will be provided by the research organisations and to describe the governance arrangements. These arrangements should enable effective decision-making and engagement with all relevant stakeholders (including students, fellows, the leadership team for the Behavioural Research Hub and wider stakeholders) to deliver their objectives.

Reviewers are asked to consider if the bid demonstrates:
- evidence of how the CDT+ will be governed and managed, including the details on the resourcing of the CDT+
- evidence that the governance arrangements for the management of the CDT+ will enable effective decision-making, robust oversight and monitoring of progress against deliverables
- how the CDT+ will engage with all relevant stakeholders
- how the structure of training will be responsive to the needs of the behavioural research whilst facilitating opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement
- how they will ensure students and fellows benefit from being part of a cohort beyond their immediate department
- succession planning for key roles within the CDT+
- how they will respond in an agile manner to new training needs
- arrangements for ensuring good practice is shared among the partners
- evidence of support from all institutional partners

- monitoring and reporting approach and plans to demonstrate the sustainability of the CDT+ beyond ESRC's investment.

***Points to consider:***

A governance structure must be in place, and applicant(s) have been asked to propose how this could link to an ESRC-appointed Programme Board, to provide robust oversight of the partnership and monitor progress against deliverables for the national capability. Reviewers are asked to highlight where proposals do not set out a clear management structure for the CDT+ and there does not appear to be a coherent plan in place detailing how the management structure may develop over the funding period.

Applicants are required to co-ordinate and work with DTPs and other investments if relevant to share good practice. Reviewers are also asked to highlight where proposals do not provide detail on how they will respond in an agile manner to new training needs and how they will work across the CDT+ and the wider network to ensure good practice is shared.

Reviewers should also highlight whether the application sets out a feasible approach to develop other collaborations over the funding period and secure additional funding for longevity and potential scalability of this investment.

*Grading*

Reviewers are asked to indicate the grade in which they have allocated to this section (Delivery, management, and governance) using the grading structure 0 to 6.

## Allocation of studentships and fellowships

The CDT+ will be expected to support a minimum of 10 studentships per year for three cohorts, starting in October 2024. ESRC will provide funding for eight of those awards, but as this area is of considerable interest to business, public and civil society sectors, a key condition of funding is that the CDT+ supports a minimum of two additional students per year through non-academic partner(s). We have not been prescriptive about how the contributions are made as long as funding for at least two fully funded studentships is sourced from non-academic partners in the business, public and civil society sector.

Applicant(s) need to provide evidence of the sources for additional funding for two (or more) studentships or describe their strategy for securing the funding.

For the fellowships, we have not been prescriptive about the number of fellowships that must be supported through the CDT+. Applicants are expected to outline how many fellowships they will support, the fellowship length and balance between substantive new research and other development activities.

Reviewers are asked to consider if the bid demonstrates evidence of the following:

- the sources of additional funding for the two (or more) studentships, their commitment to meeting this target and how they will achieve it
- details on the internal allocation process for studentship and fellowships
- rationale for the number of fellowships
- details on how the CDT+ will support the cohort of students and fellows
- supervisory capacity and infrastructure required to support the students
- details of co-funding arrangements.

***Points to consider:***

The allocation of studentships and fellowships will be devolved to the CDT+. To ensure an applicant's potential is the primary criterion, we expect the majority of studentships and fellowships to be allocated through a fair and transparent open competition, not based on internal quotas. As such, applicant(s) must set out how they will run the allocation process and reviewers are asked to highlight where bids do not indicate a clear, fair and transparent process for selecting students and fellows.

Co-funding from non-academic partners for two additional studentships per annum, for three cohorts, is a requirement of this funding. Applicants need to evidence what co-funding they had in place at the point of application, confirmed by a letter of support from the project partner, and what their strategy was to secure additional funding. The CDT+ will only be awarded on the condition that co-funding will be secured and reviewers are asked to flag where sources of this funding have not been evidenced. Reviewers are asked to highlight where bids do not indicate this.

*Grading*

Reviewers are asked to indicate the grade in which they have allocated to this section ( Allocation of studentships and fellowships) using the grading structure 0 to 6.

**Final grade and comments**

All reviewers are asked to allocate a final, overall grade for the CDT+ proposal, taking into account comments and grades for each of the sections above using the grading structure 0 to 6.

Final comments should draw out the main strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. They should also highlight in more detail the most imaginative, innovative, and unique aspects of the proposal.

Please ensure that your comments address all of the criteria identified above and that your final grade aligns with the written commentary. Whilst we don't stipulate the length of the comments provided, these should provide sufficient detail to support and justify the grade given and will be used (unattributed) as feedback to applicants. Applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to reviewer comments prior to the shortlisting panel.

If reviewers wish to make confidential comments (either to the ESRC or the Panel Chair), please do so in the 'comments' box and mark them as confidential.

**Grading Scale**

You are invited to indicate your overall judgement of the merit of the proposal which meets all the assessment criteria and provides full and consistent evidence and justification using the following scale:

| Grade recommended | Brief reason for grade |
|---|---|
| 6 | **Outstanding**<br>The proposal is outstanding in terms of its potential merit in the delivery of world class postgraduate training provision, fit to assessment criteria for this call and approach to build capacity in behavioural research. The proposal exceeds the minimum expectations required to facilitate the provision of high-quality training (as specified in the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022). |
| 5 | **Excellent**<br>The proposal is excellent in terms of its potential merit in the delivery of world class postgraduate training provision, fit to the assessment criteria for this call and approach to build capacity in behavioural research. The proposal fully meets the minimum expectations required to facilitate the provision of high-quality training (as specified in the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022). |
| 4 | **Good**<br>The proposal is important in terms of its potential merit in the delivery of world class postgraduate training provision, fit to the assessment criteria for this call and approach to build capacity in behavioural research. The proposal meets the minimum expectations required to facilitate the provision of high-quality training (as specified in the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022). |
| 3 | **Satisfactory**<br>The proposal has significant potential in the delivery of world class postgraduate training provision, however, is not of a consistently high quality with the approach to build capacity in behavioural research and does not fully address the assessment criteria for this call. The proposal does not meet all of the expectations required to facilitate the provision of high-quality training (as specified in the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022). |
| 2 | **Fair/Some Weaknesses**<br>The proposal is worthy of support but is of lesser quality or urgency than more highly rated proposals. The proposal does not meet all of the expectations required to facilitate the provision of high-quality training (as specified in the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022). |
| 1 | **Poor**<br>The proposal is flawed in its approach to world class postgraduate training provision and approach to build capacity in behavioural research, or otherwise judged not worth pursuing; or, though possibly having sound objectives, the development and delivery of postgraduate training provision appears to be defective and therefore fails to meet the assessment criteria for this call. The proposal does not meet any of the expectations required to facilitate the provision of high-quality training (as specified in the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022). |
| 0 | **Unable to assess** |

**Further information**

- Call specification and further information for the call is available here: [Establish a Centre for Doctoral Training Plus in Behavioural Research – UKRI](#)
- [Further guidance for reviewers is available via the peer review section of the website](#)
- Information about ESRC Data Policy can be found [here](#)
- For queries relating to the Peer Review process please email: [pgtframework@esrc.ukri.org](mailto:pgtframework@esrc.ukri.org)