Commissioning the Doctoral Training Partnerships 2024

Economic and Social Research Council

Agenda

- Welcome and introduction

- Evidence base: the need for change

- Vision for Postgraduate Training

- Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines: key areas of change

- The commissioning process

- Question and Answer session

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Evidence base: the need for change

The evidence base

- Three strands of evidence

    1. Review of the PhD in the Social Sciences

    2. Data-Driven Research Skills Scoping Review

    3. Strengthening the role of the Training Needs Analysis Report

- Extensive community engagement with key stakeholders including students, supervisors, research organisations and employers.

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The PhD Review: Key Messages from the Steering Group

- Our confidence in the evidence base

- Strong foundations but really significant challenges

- Opportunity for leadership; to drive transformational change

- PhD training at the heart of wider vision for social sciences

- Wider UKRI landscape (People & Culture, New Deal for PGR).

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Highlights from the evidence

- Lack of awareness of the breadth of career opportunities

- Need greater breadth of skills; digital & data, communication, project management, teamworking

- A need to strengthen core quantitative training and ensure research methods training keeps pace with cutting edge practice

- The critical role of the supervisor in ensuring postgraduate researchers access the breadth and depth of training available

- The opportunity for the training needs analysis (TNA) process to provide a holistic, reflective and evidence-based assessment of students' learning and development needs

- Greater recognition for the skills and experience students have gained through prior study and work

- The need to increase the diversity of the student population and ensure that we support a positive and inclusive research culture which support student's health and wellbeing.

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ESRC's Vision for Postgraduate Training and Development

Develop **globally competitive** social science researchers; able to operate in **interdisciplinary**, **collaborative**, and **challenge-led** environments; across a **range of sectors**; and that are characterised by **diverse backgrounds** and experiences.

Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines: Key areas of change

Conceptual, general and specialist research training

- Partnerships should set out how they will meet our expectations including:

  - an overview of their existing strengths

  - where there is a need to develop their training offer

  - how the Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) will do this

- Partnerships can bid for funding of up to £150,000 to support the development of new training content and delivery approaches

- To support knowledge sharing, DTPs will need to identify a training lead for this work who will form part of a ESRC co-ordinated DTP training network.

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Conceptual, general and specialist research training contd.

- Partnerships should evidence the quality of the research environment they will provide for students at a disciplinary or subject area level

- Research organisations are advised to play to their research strengths where they have world class expertise and infrastructures to develop expertise in their doctoral students

- ESRC wants to support a vibrant specialist training offer for all students. As part of their bid, partnerships should indicate where they will be able to make specialist training available beyond their DTP. We anticipate at least three per year.

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Research in Practice

- Research in Practice (RiP) will be a core component of the doctoral experience

- It will comprise a range of developmental options, some of which will be co-developed with employers, users and learned societies

- Development needs analysis will be used to tailor the development options taken to students' prior experience and ongoing needs

- All students will have the opportunity to complete a placement in academia, business, government or third sector research with a target for non academic placements

- Funding for a three-month placement has been embedded within the standard PhD model, with all studentships having access to three and a half years of funding and £1,000 allocated to support the additional costs of undertaking a placement

- From October 2023, up to £40,000 will be contributed per DTP per year to the cost of administering RiP.

Scoping the Skills needed for Data Driven Research

- ESRC is committed to ensuring that social scientists have the skills and capacity to fully exploit the increasing volume of large and complex data

- To promote these objectives ESRC has commissioned the scoping of specific capacity building needs in the social sciences and identify where examples of good practice and existing strengths exist and where additional investment is needed:
    - To support data-driven **doctoral** training
    - To support researchers during **early career, mid-career and late career stages**

- The work reflects the skills requirements and opportunities to build capacity at different stages and spans qualitative and quantitative research

- The report from the doctoral work undertaken by Technopolis has informed the revised PG Training and Development Guidelines and will be published imminently

- The report on 'rest of career' which is led by the Data Driven Research Steering Group will be published in the autumn

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Development Needs Analysis

- Development needs analysis (DNA) is fundamental to achieving more flexible and responsive doctoral training-students should benefit from a tailored DNA experience that allows for specific training needs, learning outcomes and research in practice elements to be clearly defined

- At the outset of the PhD, the DNA will be used to inform the structure of funding that is appropriate for each student

- Applicants must describe the processes they will put in place to meet our expectations for development needs assessments including how they will engage with supervisors to ensure that they are aware of the different training opportunities.

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Development Needs Analysis contd.

- Applicants will also need to explain how they will ensure consistency in the approach used across the partnership and how these processes will enable them to obtain an overarching view of training needs across the DTP

- DTPs will be required to report to ESRC on development needs and emerging gaps in provision through their annual report and ESRC will undertake assurance checks on a sample of DNA forms.

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Supervision

- Effective supervision is critical to the success of a DTP-applicants are required to describe the formal systems which are in place for:

  - monitoring the performance of supervisors

  - identifying their training and professional development needs

  - ensuring that these needs are met

- Ensuring that supervisors are engaged with the DTP is essential to ensure that the student gets the most out of their ESRC studentship and the range of opportunities available to them. Applicants must set out a clear strategy for communicating with supervisors and ensuring that they are fully engaged with the aims and objectives of the DTP

- Applicants should also provide details on the professional development opportunities that will be available to supervisors and how they will encourage members of staff, including early career researchers, to join the supervisory teams.

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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- ESRC is committed to increasing the diversity of our student population and ensuring that we provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all

- DTPs are asked to set out their strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to support the participation of doctoral candidates from all backgrounds, as well as details of the support systems in place to protect and promote students' physical and mental health and wellbeing

- The strategy must consider EDI broadly, recognising the full range of protected characteristics and the socio-economic backgrounds of students

- It 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

- As part of their holistic strategy, DTPs should set out their approach to how they will make entry requirements more inclusive with greater focus on assessing potential.

The Commissioning Process

The commissioning timeline

- **31 October 2022:** Expressions of Interest

- **16:00 on 14 February 2023:** Call closes

- **March/April 2023**: Peer Review

- **June 2023:** Panel meeting to agree recommendations for accreditation

- **September 2023:** Studentship allocations confirmed

- **October 2024:** First students start under new framework

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Review process

- ESRC will be recruiting a number of assessors to join a bespoke peer review college to assess the DTP applications

- Expertise will be sought from across the social sciences, from both academics and users

- A panel of experts will also be brought together to form a commissioning panel

- The commissioning panel will hold interviews with DTP Directors and their teams w/c 26 June 2023. These will be held at Polaris House in Swindon.

Demand Management

- Will no longer use REF metrics

- Instead we indicate the number of DTPs we anticipate supporting and the number of studentships available annually

- We emphasise that to be competitive applicants must be able to meet all the assessment criteria.

Assessment criteria

- Working in partnership

- Content and delivery of training

  - Conceptual, general and specialist training

  - Research in Practice

  - Capacity building in priority areas

  - Collaborative studentships and international engagement

  - Development Needs Analysis

  - Supervision

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Delivery, Management and Governance

- Allocation of studentships.

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Steers

- ESRC will strategically allocate 30% of the studentships to DTPs which evidence strength in our four priority areas:

  - Data skills

  - Advanced quantitative methods

  - Interdisciplinary research which straddles other research council remits

  - Pockets of excellence

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ADR UK

- ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK, part of ESRC) will be offering learning opportunities linked to specific administrative data assets and data collections to support DTPs to further develop capacity in the use of administrative data

- Additional resources to support research using administrative data will include
    - Support to access the data through relationships with data owners and data processors

    - Promotional materials including explainer videos and webinars

    - Access to themed user groups/networks which will include current users of the data

    - Provision of synthetic data

    - Access to new courses, specific to data and generic skills.

For more information, please email **hub@adruk.org** or see the ADR UK website (www.adruk.org) **Funding Opportunities - ADR UK**

Number of awards and funding available

- It is anticipated that up to 16 DTPs will be awarded

- Funding is available to support up to 500 studentships per year, for five consecutive cohorts (the first being 2024/25)

- 150 of the 500 studentships available per year will be allocated strategically by ESRC

- The remaining 350 studentships will be allocated responsively, based on the strengths within the DTP application.

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Studentship allocation

In determining the final allocation for each DTP; the commissioning panel will consider the following areas:

- the quality of training provided across the core and subject specific areas as well as the broader training being offered

- whether the partnership has the supervisory capacity and infrastructure required to support the number of students requested

- inclusive partnerships: DTPs incorporating partner institutions that offer excellence in social science training and research

- strengths in data skills, advanced quantitative methods (AQM) and interdisciplinary research.

- the DTPs internal allocation process

Question and Answer session