

UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position

Fellowship title: DBT economy growth and productivity analytical fellowship

Fellowship type: Core policy fellowship

Host organisation: [Department for Business & Trade](#)

Host team: Analytical Data Science Team (Analysis Directorate Strategy and Growth)

Summary: opportunity to work on key drivers of economic growth and productivity, including innovation diffusion, competition and scale-up of innovative companies

Policy topic: economic growth and productivity

Research Council: ESRC

Academic discipline(s): economics, data science, data methods, mathematics and social research

Research career stage: open to early or mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

Inception phase:

Estimated start date: February 2026. Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements

Duration: three months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Main placement phase:

Duration: 12 months

FTE: 0.6 to 1 FTE

Knowledge exchange phase:

Duration: three months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements: we are flexible as to location. We can arrange for the fellow to work in any of the three DBT offices where our current analytical data science teams are based (London, Salford and Cardiff)

Hybrid working: we are flexible as to working patterns and hybrid working. We found that 40% contact time in the office works well for collaboration, but we are happy to make reasonable adjustments based on circumstances. During the inception phase we anticipate the fellow joining face-to-face meetings approximately twice a month. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

Security clearance: Basic Personnel Security Standard checks (BPSS) is required and usually takes around six weeks. Inception phase can begin before the security clearance process is completed but will be required for the main placement phase. Prior to that access the building is still possible, but wider access, for example, to IT, is not. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels](#) for further information

Fellowship description

At the centre of economic policymaking in DBT, this role offers an exciting opportunity to work on the drivers of economic growth and the post-2008 productivity 'puzzle', a high-profile policy area. The Analysis Group's current research focus is at the intersection of innovation, competition and business investment as key drivers of growth. We are particularly interested in the following policy questions:

- Why the diffusion of innovation from frontier to laggard firms has slowed globally (and in the UK in particular) and to what extent this is due to the rise of the digital or knowledge economy and 'superstar' firms
- Why some of the UK's most innovative start-ups choose to be acquired rather than scale-up, and what are the barriers faced by the next generation of scale-up firms
- What makes some firms more likely to invest in tangible and intangible capital and how does this vary across different types of firms (not so much in terms of sector, but, for example, by stage of their lifecycle or growth ambitions)
- How to develop policy that will boost investment in the UK and where investment can deliver the biggest boost to productivity
- How to make work pay a success for the British Economy

We are flexible as to the nature of the project undertaken by our fellow as long as it relates to economic growth and maximises policy impact. Examples of areas with scope for original research and innovative analytical techniques include:

1. Understanding drivers and patterns of innovation diffusion in the UK using data science techniques:

ESRC recognise this is a major gap in our understanding of how innovation translates into economic growth and productivity, as well as where innovation has the greatest spillovers to the wider economy. A project could, therefore, explore how different technologies diffuse through sectors, regions and firms. The fellow could build on business surveys or use a data science-led approach (for example, real-time data). There are opportunities to link up with key actors such as the Productivity Institute, the Innovation Diffusion Unit at LSE, the OECD's AI Diffuse project and government agencies such as HMRC.

2. Exploring links between market concentration and innovation or innovation diffusion in the UK:

The fellow could explore a range of empirical techniques. There is scope to research different indicators of market concentration and indicators of innovation or technology adoption to understand the extent to which poor competition is a barrier to innovation and innovation diffusion.

3. Understanding drivers of 'scale up' culture in the UK:

Understanding the drivers of successful firm scale-up is a key priority of our Secretary of State. The fellow could pursue a quantitative, qualitative or combined methods approach. For example, the project could explore the behaviour of different 'types' of firms in a sector (such as rapidly scaling start up, steady-state firms, acquisition relative to scale-up), do they have common characteristics and how do they interact with characteristics of the market (such as availability of Venture Capital funding). Typology-building could be extended with an econometric approach, linking firm and investor behaviour to key outcomes such as output, employment and productivity.

These questions can be chosen and refined during the inception phase, based on the fellow's interest and input in collaboration with DBT. The fellow is expected to:

- Codevelop a research project relating to economic growth and productivity and linked to the policy areas within DBT. This could be best achieved by being embedded in the team
- Develop the evidence and policy recommendations using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, ideally drawing from the expertise of academics, policymakers and business amongst others (for example, workshops)
- Apply DBT quality assurance processes where appropriate

In exchange:

- The fellow will be able to get involved in policymaking and have a first-hand experience in how policy decisions are made
- Access to not just a wide range of microdata but also multi-decade expertise by access facilitators on how to use and interpret it for social sciences
- They will be fully embedded in a DBT team supporting their work as well as gain access to cross-government network
- To be able to see their research applied where it was meant to be and see its real-life impact
- Leave a lasting mark on the civil service by broadening their knowledge in their field
- DBT is aware of the publication pressure of academics, and we will support you to publish any non-sensitive material in academic journals as well as contributing to government publications with a mutual understanding about content checking

Person specification

Applications will be assessed by UKRI panel assessment against the following essential opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria:

Essential criteria:

- A proven academic track record in economics or data science
- Subject matter expertise in specific topics related to the opportunity (such as economics of growth and productivity, competition, innovation and entrepreneurial culture)
- Strong analytical skills relating to the opportunity (for example, the ability to synthesise a range of quantitative and qualitative data using statistical and data science methods, economics)
- Strong communication skills for both technical and policy audiences

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be assessed at the host led interview selection process against the following desirable opportunity-specific requirements:

Desirable criteria:

- Experience in codeveloping and leading policy-focussed analytical outputs for government departments
- Experience or willingness to learn about policy development in and working in a government context
- Ability to design and lead on evidence-gathering and knowledge exchange activity between research and policy communities

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI [privacy notice](#).

DBT's privacy notice can be found here: [DBT personal information charter](#). Hosts will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.