



Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council

Doctoral focal award: nuclear skills Webinar

19 August 2025

The webinar will start at 14:00

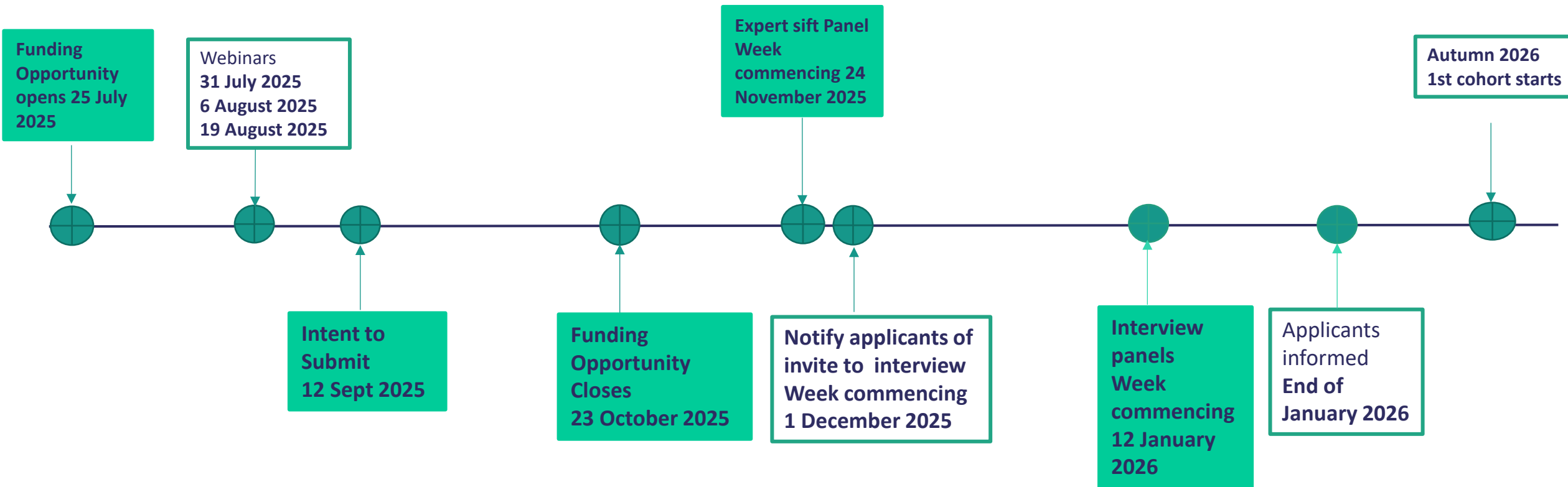
Welcome to the nuclear skills webinar

- The webinar will start at 14:00
- Technical difficulties: email students@epsrc.ukri.org
- Please wait for the end of the presentation before submitting questions
- Submit questions through the MS Teams Q&A function only (not chat / raise hand function)
- Detailed questions specific to your CDT proposal: email us directly at students@epsrc.ukri.org
- We aim to publish slides and answers to submitted questions on the funding opportunity page after the 3rd webinar. Webinars will be recorded to help us prepare this
- Full details are on the funding finder page - [Doctoral focal award: nuclear skills – UKRI](#)
- EPSRC are leading the webinar on behalf of UKRI and the UK government

Doctoral focal awards: nuclear skills

- Building on National Nuclear Strategic Plan for Skills and UK government priorities
- Objective is to train ~500 researchers and innovators, developing cutting-edge skills, experience and industry connections for careers in the UK nuclear sector
- To deliver high quality, cohort-based doctoral training in nuclear skills for the UK nuclear civil and defence sectors, to home students to start autumn 2026
- Open to new collaborations, or to expand or extend existing investments
- **Research organisations can only apply as project lead on 1 submitted application**
- Expecting at least £45m UK Government funding, with match funding expectations
- Closes 23 October 2025, 4.00pm UK time
- Mandatory intent to submit by 12 September 2025, 4.00pm UK time, with plan to publish some details from these

Doctoral focal award: nuclear skills - Timeline



Scope - expectations

- Applications must demonstrate the specific need for a doctoral focal award, including:
 - clear requirement for doctoral level education in the area
 - need for cohort-based training approach
 - both depth and breadth in research training, to address an identified skills need
 - co-creation and delivery with industry/user stakeholders
- No restrictions on research doctoral qualification (for example, PhD, EngD)
- Must offer option of part time study
- Formal assessable taught programme – no set requirements on content or qualifications
- Opportunities to work both within and across cohorts, and for business/user engagement



Scope - expectations

- Scope crosses the remits of all relevant UKRI councils, including EPSRC, NERC and STFC
- Applications welcomed in all areas relevant of nuclear skills across the breadth of the nuclear lifecycle and to meet national and international defence commitments
- Trusted research and innovation: applicants may be asked to demonstrate how awards will comply with our TR&I approach and expectation
- Successful applicants will be asked to develop additional plans in areas including a positive culture and environment



Eligibility

- Applications must be led by institutions eligible for UKRI funding, and must include a degree awarding body
- One application max as lead organisation
- Applications are welcomed from both single and multi-institutional teams
- Project lead must be from the lead organisation and satisfy standard UKRI eligibility criteria
- Generally expect no more than 10 project co-leads
- We welcome as project co-leads research technical professionals and professional research and investment strategy managers who are integral to developing and delivering the focal award



Eligible costs

- Studentship costs (fees, stipends, research training support) for the equivalent of 32 students over 4 cohorts
 - Strongly encourage enhanced stipends if justified
 - Finalising funding profile with UK government: may need to ramp up student numbers over cohorts
- Can include delivery, coordination and management staff costs (**not** supervision)
- Can include other relevant costs such as support for diversity and mobility of career paths, career development for students, innovative recruitment approaches
- Start-up costs for new centres only
- All costs based on **Oct 2025 prices** and UKRI will add fees and stipends indexation
- UK government funding paid at 100% for all eligible costs



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Partnerships and leverage

- Appropriate user co-creation, contributions and engagement expected
- Strategic objective: funding across focal awards to be 40% UK government, 40% project partners, 20% host organisations
 - Includes full economic costing of doctoral training, in-kind contributions
 - Measured across award lifetime
 - No assessment criterion on institutional match funding
- Level of partner contributions as appropriate to R&D intensity of the sector, size and nature of partners involved (such as SMEs vs large companies)



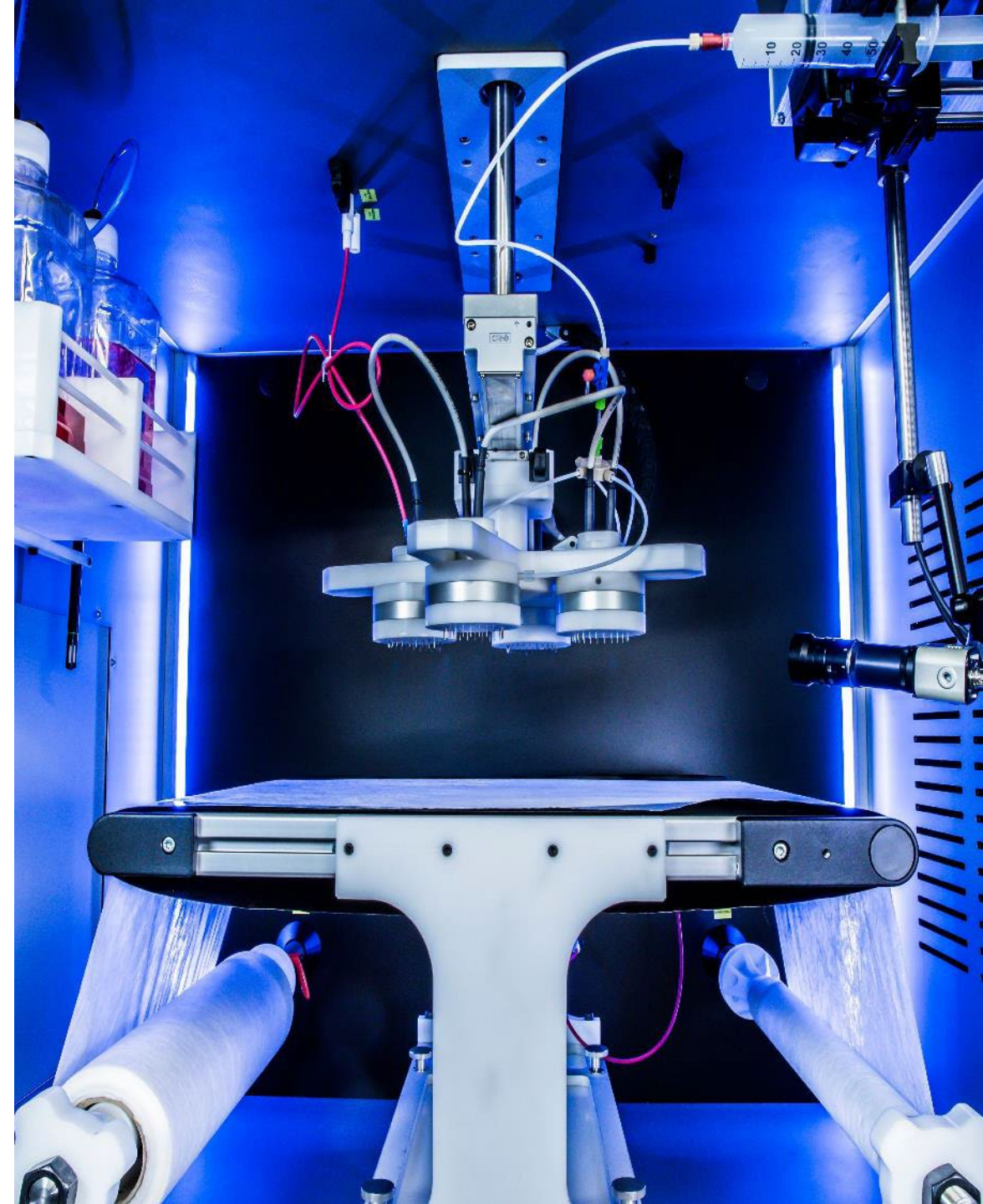
Partnerships and leverage

- Minimum requirement: additional studentship costs support from non-UKRI sources to achieve the minimum of 40 students across four cohorts
 - If 32 come from UK government, this means ≥ 8 from non-UKRI sources
- Project partner letters of support must be provided and include breakdowns of total contributions (cash and in-kind)
- Applicants need a clear plan to maximise leverage from existing and new collaborations over the award's lifetime towards the 40/40/20 aim
- No letters from MOD or DESNZ; other parts of government or MOD / DESNZ arms length body or companies ok



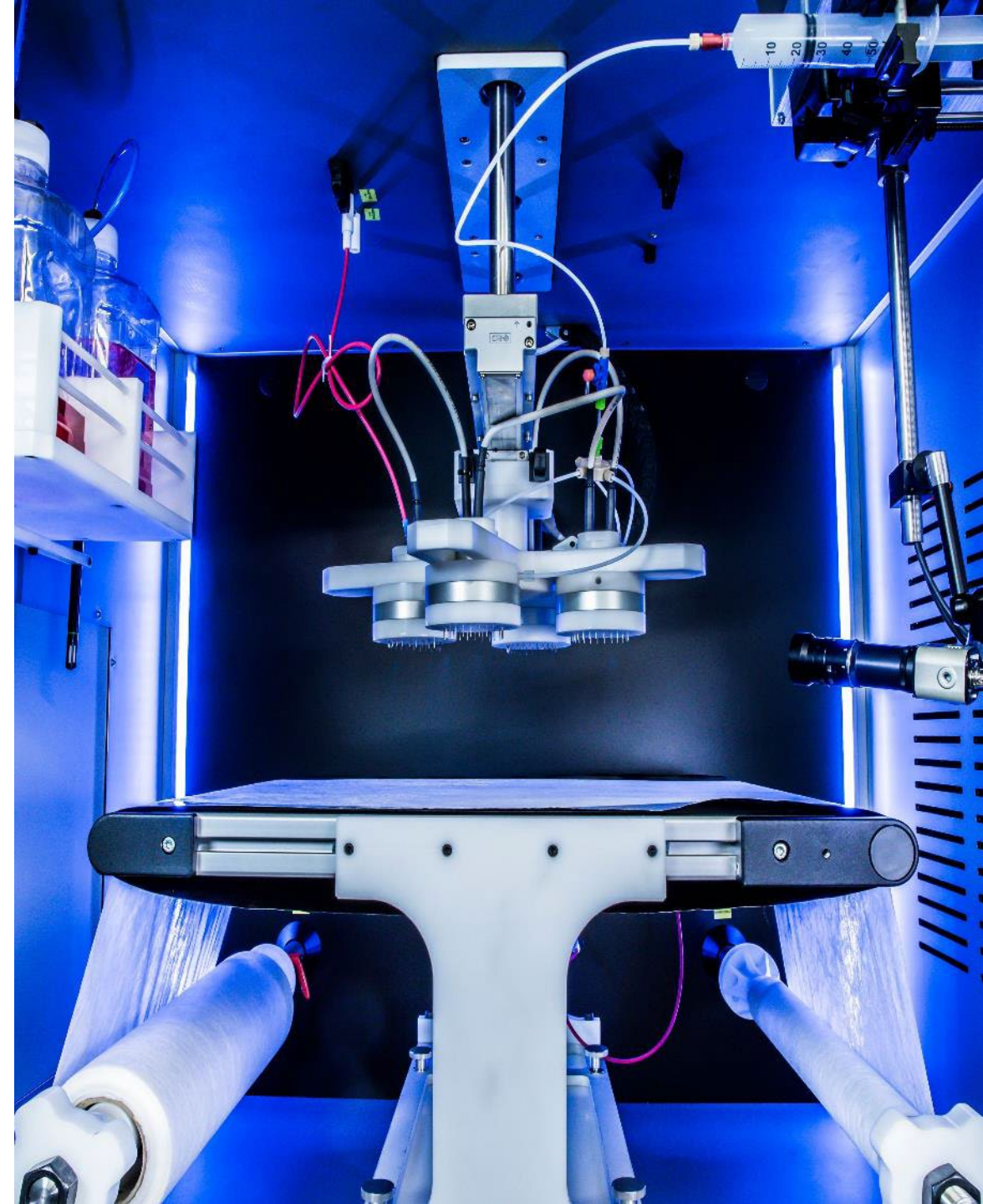
Intent to submit

- Mandatory
- Deadline: **12 September 2025 16.00**
- Citizen space survey: link on funding finder
- Information required:
 - Project lead + email address
 - Project Lead Institution
 - Collaborating team with institution
 - Summary proposed focal award
 - Consent to publish



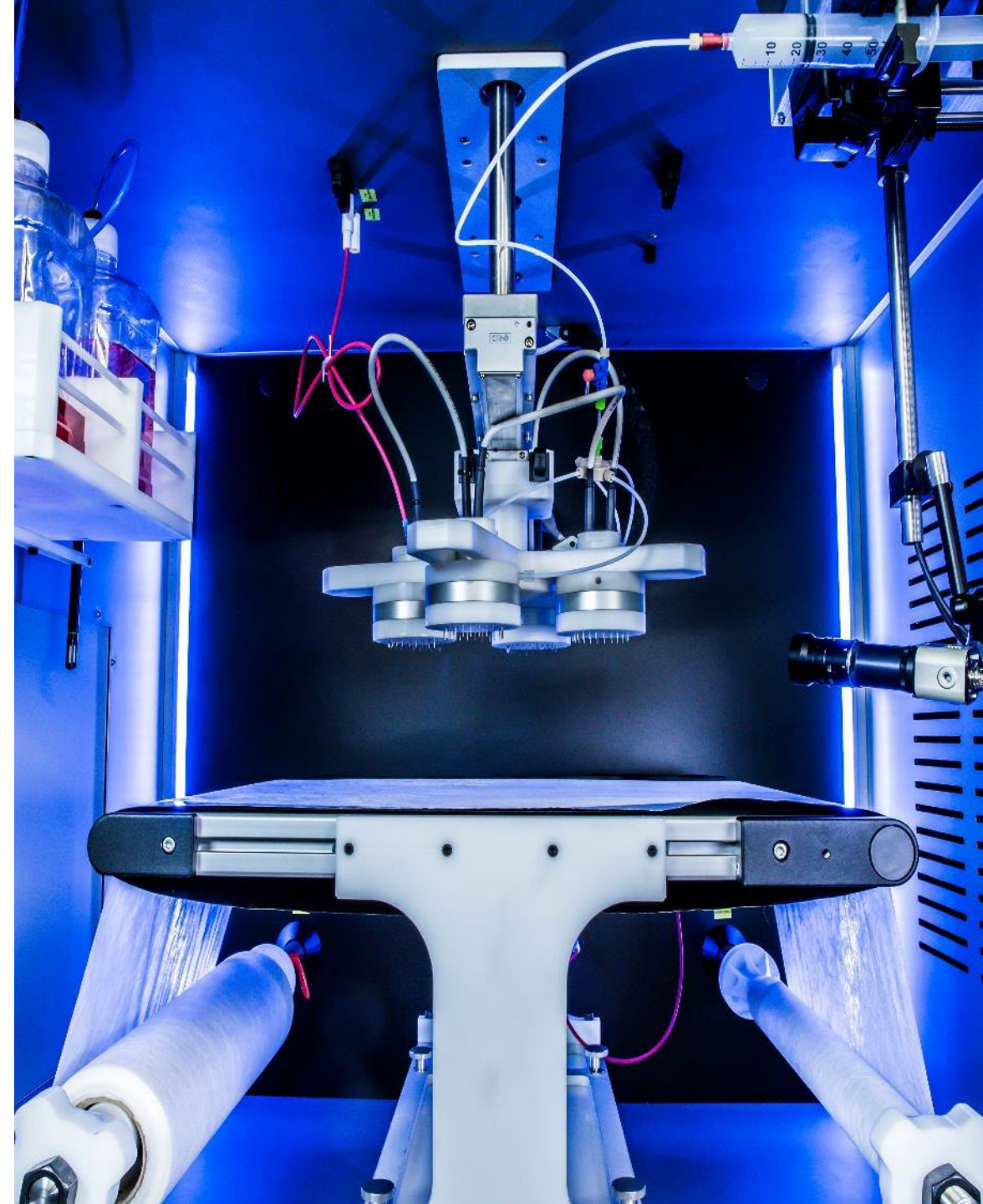
How to apply

- One focal award application per institution
- Deadline: **23 October 2025 16.00**
- Funding finder link [Doctoral focal award: nuclear skills – UKRI](#)
- Please start focal award application title with **Nuclear doctoral focal award in...**



How to apply

- Statement of support from all project partners
 - Guidance for project partners is included on the funding finder web page.
 - Only letters of support from partners **contributing** to the centre in some way should be included; no letters of general support
- Facilities technical assessment – optional
- Sensitive information – email EPSRC via address on funding finder



Costings Table

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Full Proposal Assessment Criteria

- Proposals will be assessed **at both stages** against these assessment criteria :
 - **Vision**
 - **Approach**
 - **Positive culture and environment**
 - **Capability to deliver**
 - **Partnerships and governance**
 - **Resources and cost justification**
 - **Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)**
- All the assessment criteria are **weighted equally**

Assessment – sift stage

- Assessment by expert sift panel, drawn from academia, industry and other relevant communities
- Proposals will be assessed and scored against the published criteria
- Proposals will be banded to prioritise applications to be invited for interview
- UKRI and the UK government will make the final decision on those invited for interview, and aim to communicate this w/c 1 December 2025



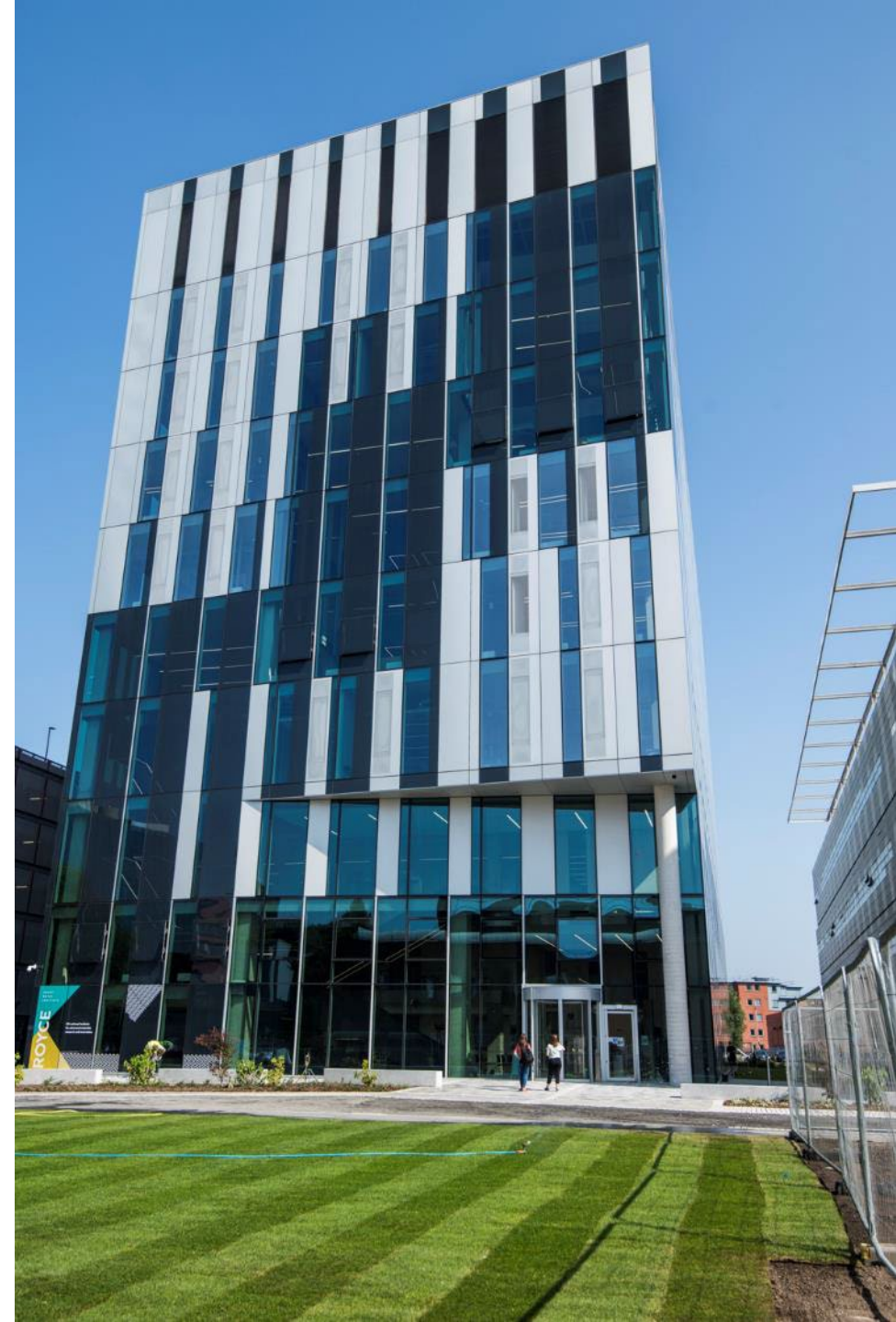
Assessment – interview

- Interview panels will be held **in person** week commencing 12 January 2026
 - Venue: Polaris House, Swindon
- Interviewers will be drawn from the academic and user communities in the UK
- Up to 3 people from the applicant team may attend
- Interview format: short pitch (no slides) from the applicants on their vision and strategy, followed by a question-and-answer session
- Proposals will be assessed and scored against the criteria, and banded
- UKRI and the UK government will make the final decision following the interviews



Portfolio balancing

- Following sift and interview panels
- Will consider the following:
 - strategic priorities for MOD and DESNZ, as outlined in the 'What we are looking for section' on the funding finder
 - nuclear industrial sectors
 - scientific areas
 - geography (based on the anticipated location of students)
 - UK research organisations



In conclusion

- Intent to Submit deadline 12 September 2025, 4.00pm
- Deadline for submission 23 October 2025, 4.00pm
- Detailed questions specific to your proposal: email us directly at students@epsrc.ukri.org



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Questions?

Answers to Questions sent in ahead of the webinar and asked during the webinar are being collated into a FAQs document, which we aim to upload to the funding opportunity web page