Question	UKRI response	Topic
How many co-leads are likely to be invited to the interview?	It will be a maximum of 3 attendees for the interview.	Assessment Process
What is meant by the term 'Proposals being banded'?	Panels will rank proposals into bands of applications of similar quality, against the published assessment criteria.	
Will all seven criteria be expected to be covered in the interview? i.e. sift covers all, but will interview focus on a smaller number?	All assessment criteria will be covered in both the sift panel and the interview panel.	
Will equal weightings for the assessment criteria be applied across all seven criteria or just across the "core five"?	It is the same weighting across all 7 assessment criteria. The panels will agree on an overall score, taking into account all 7 assessment criteria with equal weighting. This is like other panels run through the UKRI funding service.	
In the regional information what should I put for students that spend 50% time with industry partners and 50% university, such as for EngDs?	For most students, allocate them to the one region where they will spend the majority of time during their funded period for simplicity. If a significant number of students will be genuinely 50/50 across two regions, you can split them 50/50 across both on the form. However, this is only meant to be a guide, so if unsure or if it only affects a handful of students, please just put down what you feel is the most appropriate.	
Can you please expand on the 40:40:20 model. Does the 20% equate to the institutional match? How does this fit with a minimum of 8 leveraged students? How many awards will be funded in total? The objective of this funding opportunity is to develop circa 500 PhD graduates over the funding period which seems to contradict the statement that 4-5 centres will be funded with 40 students each. Can you clarify please? The call document states: "We will fund studentship costs for the equivalent of 32 students over four cohorts. Additional support must be provided from non-UKRI sources to achieve the minimum required	The 40:40:20 model refers to the funding contribution: 40% UK government, 40% project partners, 20% host organisations. To meet the strategic objectives of this funding, it is expected that the level of funding across focal awards will be 40% UK government investment, 40% from project partners and 20% from organisations hosting students. The balance of funding takes into account all relevant contributions and the full economic costing of delivering doctoral training. There is no requirement for this balance to be achieved at the point of application, but applicants will need a clear plan to maximise leverage from existing and new collaborations over the award's lifetime towards this aim. There is a maximum number of 32 students that can be requested from UKRI, but 40 is the minimum number of students for each award. We expect most centres will deliver more students than 40 over their lifetime, based on the 40:40:20 leverage requirements. The exact amount of government funding	Budget

student numbers (40 students across four cohorts)." Do you therefore anticipate making as many as 6 or 7 awards? Could you further clarify how the finances work? There are two pieces of text which seem to contradict each other (32 studentships vs. 40:40:20 fund available). If more applications have successfully attracted industry funding, does this mean this call will fund more than 4-5 CDTs?	is still to be confirmed, but 500 students remain the government's ambition for the final portfolio. The number of awards will depend on the cost of applications and on the final UK government budget. We currently anticipate funding around 4-5 awards.
Can you give examples of in-kind contributions from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) please? Would supervisory time count? And are there limits for the other costs associated with running the focal award, such as a focal award manager? At a previous webinar I understand there was a suggestion that supervisor time could count towards the 20% HEI required financial contribution. However, I would understand this to be (partially) funded by the student fee, which is a grant funded - please could this be clarified?	We will develop more detailed guidance on what counts as institutional contributions in collaboration with successful awards. We want to include all costs that form part of the full economic cost of delivering doctoral training, but with recognition that some aspects are covered by student fees. Subject to the details of what are / are not eligible costs in the opportunity, there is no numerical limit on other costs. However, all costs need to be relevant and justified.
Can we ask for 40 studentships from the grant and then match with 40 studentships from partners and 8 from the research organisation?	The maximum that can be charged to the grant are studentship costs for the equivalent of 32 students. Therefore, you cannot fully charge 40 students to the grant. However, this figure is based on funding 32 students fully on the grant. You could, for example, choose to fund 64 students with each student receiving 50% of their studentship costs from the grant.
If the end date for a part-time student is beyond the grant end date - will we be allowed to use the UKRI award to cover costs?	In line with UKRI's terms and conditions, we will allow grant extensions where part-time students extend beyond the grant end date, and also where this happens due to medical, parental or other leave incurred during the studentship.

In terms of the 40% industry funding, is there any requirement for university underwriting of third party commitments (as per the 2023 CDT call)?	The university is required to underwrite at least the value of leverage that ensures the minimum number of 40 students is delivered. Institutions should however have a clear plan to achieve the 40:40:20 contribution ratio set out in the opportunity and be prepared to deliver this. UKRI and the UK government reserve the right to suspend or terminate grants that don't meet the grant conditions.	
What is the requirement for the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) - for students and staff on the award? Will all need screening?	BPSS will be required for both staff and students working on what would be considered sensitive projects. We do not expect this to be secured at submission; however, successful delivery of the award is dependent on achieving BPSS clearance where relevant.	Eligibility
If employees are following a PhD, what does the UKRI funding cover? Would it cover full or part time fees and research training support costs (RTSG) only, with the company fully covering the salary of the employee?	The UKRI funding could cover FT/PT fees, RTSG and it is also possible for the stipend to be used as a contribution to an employee's salary.	
Can the same person be a co-lead on more than one application?	Yes, this is allowed. However, the named individual must not be working more than 100% FTE.	
At EOI stage, can one university lead more than one bid? i.e. if the university has not decided which to support by EOI stage.	Ultimately only 1 application can be submitted per institution. At the Intent to Submit stage, we would allow 2 different leads from a university but would ask institutions to email students@epsrc.ukri.org at the same time to explain the context.	
Previous EPSRC awards have permitted international PhD students 'aligned' to a CDT programme. These were students whose fees and maintenance were typically paid through a scholarship or sponsorship (not by UKRI) and who were permitted to participate in the training and cohort activities available to UKRI-funded CDT students. Will 'aligned' PhD students be permitted in programmes funded through this call?	All students in nuclear skills focal award cohorts must be eligible for home fee status, regardless of who is paying the studentship costs. This is a stipulation by the UK government, in line with the objective to train people who will be eligible to work in the UK nuclear sector upon completion of their doctorate. The only potential engagement by international students is as what we've previously called 'aligned students' – students who are funded by other sources and may occasionally take part in cohort activities, but at no additional cost to the grant and without being full members of the cohort. No costs related to these students could be included in calculating leverage against the 40:40:20 expectation.	Eligible costs

	Another consideration is that for self-funded international students, there could be restrictions on the type of project they are allowed to participate in due to the sensitive nature of particular projects (for example, related to national security).
Can you clarify if the fee level will be costed at the UKRI indicative rate or can we use the RO's fee level?	Fees should be equal to the level used for home, non-UKRI funded students on similar programmes at your institution(s). Therefore, if this is higher than the UKRI indicative rate, this can be charged to the grant. Note: all students must be eligible for home fee status.
Will it be possible to request funding (fees, travel and subsistence, other RTSG) for studentships that are for employees (of partner organisations), where no stipend is required as the student will be a salaried member of staff?	It is possible to use UKRI funding to cover fees and RTSG for these students. It is also possible for the stipend to be used as a contribution to an employee's salary. However, at least part of the salary should be considered leverage in line with a strategic objective of this call: funding across focal awards to be 40% UK government, 40% project partners, 20% host organisations. We encourage the inclusion of students remaining in employment but we also recommend getting in touch before applying (students@epsrc.ukri.org) to discuss options and how to cost this in the grant.
Can you confirm that for individual studentships, the usual rules will apply. i.e. that each student that has a UKRI funding component has to be a minimum of 50% UKRI-funded?	Where applicants can leverage more than 50% of studentship costs from non-UKRI sources, UKRI will allow this in this opportunity, notwithstanding UKRI training grant condition 4.5. This is a pilot building on EPSRC's 2023 CDTs; all other UKRI training grants must follow the 50% rule in condition 4.5.
Are consumable costs for student projects an eligible cost?	Yes, if justified, and this should be covered by research training support costs (RTSG).
Can you go into more detail about which setup costs are eligible, regarding existing infrastructure? For example, we have existing CDTs in different areas that don't have appropriate training, and the CDT administration would be stretched to support more. Would we qualify for startup, or is it only those have have no existing CDTs (in other areas)?	Setup costs are eligible if it can be demonstrated there is no existing infrastructure at the host organisations to deliver the proposed award, and that additional expenditure is therefore necessary to set up the award. We won't pay to replicate existing training or administration.

Will the RTSG facilities funding also cover access to industrial facilities - such as those which handle specific radioactive materials that can only be used in certain facilities.	Research training support (RTSG) is to be used to cover costs that enable a student to carry out their project.	
Is there any restriction on companies owned by/ rm's length bodies of MoD/DESNZ/other government departments contributing to awards as project partners?	No. The only restriction is we will not permit letters from the MOD or DESNZ themselves, as they are funders.	Partners
While students will be home based can you confirm if it's okay to have multi-national or even non-UK based organisations as project partners (e.g. defence-linked organisations in NATO countries)?	Yes, subject to trusted research and innovation principles. There may be restrictions on individual projects, depending on security requirements.	
Many thanks on the response around non-UK partners; building out of this might it be useful / helpful in terms of considering submissions if we emphasise any in-house capabilities in terms of cleared academic and other staff?	Applicants are encouraged to form a consortium with the skills and expertise to deliver the proposed vision and approach. Proposals should discuss how the right people and organisations have been brought together.	
For the doctoral focal awards that are defence related: do the project leads have to be UK nationals?	Not necessarily, but there may be restrictions on individual projects, depending on security requirements.	
If an industrial partner funds a doctoral student from their own MoD funding, can this count as leverage or would it be double counting?	We have checked with the UK government and this would depend on the exact nature of the funding. This is something we can confirm in the guidance to those are successful for funding. If you require an answer in advance, please email students@epsrc.ukri.org with more details and we will pass this on to MoD.	
Can a co-funder fund just one element of the studentship costs, e.g. just RTSG or fees?	Yes, although typically co-funders would support a proportion of all studentship costs (fees, stipends, RTSG). New co-funding agreements for students on UKRI grants starting from 1 October 2026 must have regard to meeting commitments to diverse student needs, including absence costs and extensions.	
After the intent to submit stage, will EPSRC share a list of potential applicants/consortia externally?	Yes, we will share information on applicants and consortia provided in the intent to submit. We will look to add this to the funding finder on the UKRI website.	
With regards to the 40% industry contribution: does this need to be firmly in place at the point of application?	As much as possible at the point of application; however, we recognise that this is challenging with the time provided. At a minimum, we would expect applicants to provide details in the	

	application on how this funding would be secured, with a clear plan to attain the 40:40:20 over the lifetime of the award.	
What does UKRI, the MoD, DESNZ want to see: generic focal awards covering all research themes or focussed on special themes? Is there a preference in terms of the breadth of the doctoral focal award (DFA) scope? Would you like to see DFAs which span broadly across the relevant areas, or would narrower scopes be equally welcome?	We want to cover the breadth of the scope in the opportunity, but only across the portfolio of successful awards, not in each individual award. UKRI and the UK government agreed the final scope in the funding opportunity. Anything that meets that scope can be submitted to this opportunity, but applicants should read the 'What we're looking for' section closely and ensure their proposal meets the scope. The scope is broad enough to allow applicants to justify their application's 'Vision and Approach'. Please consider how your vision aligns and contributes to the wider strategies and priorities, which would include national capability and capacity needs. In addition, we would expect applicants to justify in the application the need for specific technical skills/knowledge in the nuclear sector, taking into account the goal is to 'grow the number of specialist doctoral graduates to ensure the highest level of technical skills and knowledge is available to the nuclear sector'. Your application should address why these are essential to the growth and your approach is necessary. As we are not scientific experts, we do not want to put a limit on technical areas in case we unwittingly overlook an essential technical area.	Scope
Would some replication be acceptable, if the bids were geographically distinct?	Yes, some overlap with other proposals or existing investments is acceptable, but please be aware that we will be considering portfolio balance in making interview invite and funding decisions.	
ESRC are not specifically included in the call. Will proposals which include an element of the social sciences be welcome?	Yes, an element will be acceptable, provided the proposal is within the scope set out in the opportunity. A proposal predominantly focused on social sciences will not be in scope.	

In terms of recruitment, it can be challenging to recruit UK candidates. What's the remit within this call?	This opportunity invites applicants to propose innovative routes for student recruitment and retention, including activities aimed at attracting UK home students, widening the participation of underrepresented groups in doctoral study, and enhanced stipends.	
It was mentioned that students should work across cohorts - is this just between annual intakes within the DFA, or across all funded cohorts/DFAs?	This should at least be between all the cohorts involved in the specific focal award. Where applicable this could be with cohorts from other focal awards and centres for doctoral training, but could also involve doctoral training partnerships or doctoral landscape awards, working within the same or associated research areas.	
For the scope section, you mentioned a requirement for doctoral level education in the "area". I assume you mean research area as opposed to geographical area?	Yes, that is correct, it is research area rather than geographical area.	
Do you think that there will be a sufficient number of good quality PhD candidates to fill the 50+ new PhD vacancies in the nuclear area next year? Especially considering there are already several existing PhD sponsorship opportunities in nuclear too.	The expectation is that candidates will be drawn from a variety of different backgrounds and career paths, rather than solely from more traditional undergraduate routes. For example, there is interest from industry in supporting the development of their current employees.	
Is there an expectation that all PhD/EngD students will be full-time students or can part-time studentships be awarded?	In line with UKRI's training grant terms and conditions, part-time study is welcomed.	Student experience
Could students be embedded within industry for portions of their time and not just based within their HEI?	Yes. There are different models, such as short internships and placements, along with students being based entirely in an industry setting. All options are welcome, but applicants should contact EPSRC with any specific question.	
We have full and part time PhD students which are based in industry but are employees - is this allowed?	There are different models and UKRI can be flexible. Applicants proposing more innovative options, such as contributions to salaries, are encouraged to contact EPSRC before submission, to discuss the best route to fund this. Among other issues, applicants must always ensure that training grant funding is compliant with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.	
Why is the grant funded over 4 years and not 5 years in this instance?	This reflects the timeline that the additional funding was available for.	
Can formal training include a (funded) MRes year?	Yes.	