

UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

About your activity

Title of your activity

Doctoral focal awards: venture doctorates

Council or business area

EPSRC, BBSRC, UKRI talent

Aims and objectives

To invest in doctoral focal awards to deliver high quality, cohort-based doctoral education focused on entrepreneurial skills and commercialisation.

Who is affected?

External stakeholders:

- UK government
- Venture capital and similar businesses
- Social enterprises and other not-for-profits engaged in entrepreneurship
- Universities, including academics, professional managers, research offices, technology transfer teams etc
- Current and potential doctoral students

Internal stakeholders:

- EPSRC, BBSRC, UKRI talent and UKRI commercialisation teams involved in delivery
- Other council talent and impact / commercialisation teams
- Colleagues who will support proposal assessment and awards

What data and consultation have you used?

Engagement with:

- UK higher education institutions, including administrative staff, senior leaders and individual academics
- Academic, business, not for profit and public organisations with interest in entrepreneurship and commercialisation of research
- UK Government, particularly the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade

Impact on specific groups

Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

Potentially negative impact of in person interviews, potentially impacting accessibility and caring responsibility for applicants, panel members and UKRI staff. The week of interviews is being communicated in the outline opportunity, providing additional time for preparation for both applicants and panel members. Final dates will be confirmed in the full applications opportunity.

Potentially negative impact of call opening dates over summer (outline applications), Christmas and February half term (full applications) school holiday periods. Interview panel reading window over Easter school holiday period. Context:

- Due to delays in receipt of confirmation of funding and making final policy decisions, the opportunity could not open sooner
- The call closing date is restricted by the requirement to give award holders sufficient time to prepare and recruit students before the 2027/28 academic year. The closing date is as late as possible, while allowing sufficient time for a fair assessment process
- Move to a two stage (outline -> full proposals) approach, rather than originally-planned full applications only. Outlines are shorter, reducing the burden on applicants that are not invited to submit a full application
- Outline applications remain open for longer than the minimum recommended in UKRI, to compensate for August opening
- Full applications open for longer than the minimum recommended in UKRI, to compensate for being open over Christmas and February half term
- The provision of a series of webinars will provide opportunities for applicants to clarify the funding opportunity scope across the call opening period.

Impact on protected characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.

Protected characteristic	Impact (positive, negative,	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact



	none or unknown)		
Age	Positive		The funding opportunity explicitly encourages attracting students from more diverse career paths, such as those that are currently in employment but looking to return to education or upskill. This is likely to improve the diversity of ages of UKRI-funded doctoral students. We will also look to ensure diversity in the outline application assessment and full application interview panels. Guidance will be provided to UKRI staff when suggesting panel members.
Disability	Negative	Access to meeting venues for panel members and applicants could have a negative impact on participation.	Outline assessment panel will be held virtually. Interview panels are planned to be in person. All venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustments offered and made to logistics and facilitation plans to support participation (both by those being interviewed and panels). Briefing events will be held by webinar, to reduce the barriers associated with in-person meetings. For any future in-person events, information will be made available for those physically not able to attend such as a webinar or transcripts.
	Positive	UKRI training grant conditions offer flexibilities and funding for disabled students	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) requirements have been embedded in the opportunity. It will be a requirement for all funded proposals to develop an EDI plan. This will ensure that university led activities such as recruitment, flexible working and other activities promote equality and inclusive participation. UKRI will highlight student support available (disabled students allowance payments, disability leave etc)
Gender reassignment	None		



Marriage or civil partnership	None		
Pregnancy and maternity	Negative	Participation in the funding opportunity may be negatively affected, if potential applicants or panel members are unavailable at key assessment stages. Access to events and panels for panel members and applicants could have a negative impact on participation.	Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will do its best to accommodate adjustments, such as virtual presence or deputising. UKRI has taken into consideration the funding opportunity opening and closing dates, webinars, panels and interviews to provide additional time where these unavoidably cross school holidays. Both the outline and full application opening periods have been extended beyond the standard 8 weeks to mitigate being open over school holidays All venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustments made to logistics and facilitation plans to support participation. Briefing events will be held by webinar, to reduce the barriers associated with in-person meetings. For any future in-person events, information will be made available for those physically not able to attend such as a webinar or transcripts. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) requirements have been embedded in the opportunity. It will be a requirement for all funded proposals to develop an EDI plan. This will ensure that university led activities such as recruitment, flexible working and other activities promote equality and inclusive participation. UKRI offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Additional care requirements or facilities could be required if individuals need to: • Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day. • Work extended hours on a normal working day. • Attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas.



			It is an individual's responsibility to check with UKRI and confirm what costs can be reimbursed prior to attendance at a panel or interview.
Race	Negative	Universities and other organisations vary in the diversity of their populations; organisational restrictions could have potentially negative impacts	While limited to 1 application per lead organisation, the demand management policy allows a wider range of organisations than standard to submit to the opportunity, allowing a broad range of organisations to participate. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) requirements have been embedded in the call. It will be a requirement for all funded proposals to develop an EDI plan. This will ensure that university led activities such as recruitment, flexible working and other activities promote equality and inclusive participation.
Religion or belief	Negative	Activities could coincide with religious holidays and festivals	Both the outline and full application opening periods have been extended beyond the standard 8 weeks to mitigate being open over religious holidays and festivals. A full timeline will be provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will work to mitigate any conflicts that arise.
Sex			We will also look to ensure diversity in the assessment and interview panels. Guidance will be provided to UKRI staff when suggesting panel members. Panel guidance documents have been updated to reduce the potential of unconscious bias
Sexual orientation	None		

Impact on additional characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.



Additional characteristics	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Geographical location and place	Unknown		Students can only be based at organisations that are part of successful consortia, limiting the amount of opportunities. The organisational eligibility and demand management policies allow a wider range of organisations than standard to submit to the opportunity, allowing a broad range of organisations to participate. Geography will form part of the portfolio balancing before interview and funding decisions
Socio-economic status	Positive		Provision of funded studentships, explicit encouragement to attract students from more diverse career paths and ability to provide enhanced stipends, all have the potential to attract students from lower income backgrounds
Education background	Positive		Provision of funded studentships, explicit encouragement to attract students from more diverse career paths and ability to provide enhanced stipends, all have the potential to attract students from more diverse education backgrounds
Parent or guardian responsibilities		Participation in the funding opportunity may be negatively affected, if potential applicants or panel members are unavailable at key assessment stages. Access to events, interviews and panels for both panel members and applicants could have a negative impact on participation.	Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will do its best to accommodate adjustments, such as virtual presence or deputising. UKRI has taken into consideration the funding opportunity opening and closing dates, webinars, panels and interviews to provide additional time where these unavoidably cross school holidays. Both the outline and full application opening periods have been extended beyond the standard 8 weeks to mitigate being open over school holidays



			All venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustments made to logistics and facilitation plans to support participation. Briefing events will be held by webinar, to reduce the barriers associated with in-person meetings. For any future in-person events, information will be made available for those physically not able to attend such as a webinar or transcripts. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) requirements have been embedded in the opportunity. It will be a requirement for all funded proposals to develop an EDI plan. This will ensure that university led activities such as recruitment, flexible working and other activities promote equality and inclusive participation. EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Additional care requirements or facilities could be required if individuals need to: • Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day. • Work extended hours on a normal working day. • Attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas. It is an individual's responsibility to check with UKRI and confirm what costs can be reimbursed prior to attendance at a panel or interview.
Carer responsibilities			As above
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	None		
Other characteristics	None		



Final decision

Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

State which one of the following outcomes applies and give a reason for your decision.

1. No negative or positive impact identified therefore, activity will proceed
- 2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which will eliminate negative impact or promote equality – selected option**
3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.
4. Barriers and impact identified, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the activity. Proceed with caution with this activity knowing the impact

A number of potential risks have been identified and actively considered as part of the funding opportunity design and internal management processes for delivery. These risks have been mitigated as far as possible. Further risks could emerge once awards are active. We will actively monitor the ED&I aspects via the mechanisms described in the funding opportunity to minimise the likelihood that university processes are discriminatory.

Review and sign off

How will you monitor and review the impact of your activity?

This EIA will be monitored throughout the funding opportunity assessment process to ensure mitigations already identified are resulting in the required impact. This monitoring will also enable identification of any impacts not currently identified and allow for additional mitigations to be applied.

Once funded, a monitoring and evaluation framework will be in place to monitor the awards throughout their lifetime. Each award will have a UKRI project officer who will attend steering committee meetings and provide support. It is intended to include a mid-term review of all awards at this stage .

What is the EIA review date?

October 2027



UK Research
and Innovation

Contact

Nick Cooper, Joint Head of Talent and Skills, venturedoctorates@ukri.org

Will the EIA be published?

Yes

Who has this been signed off by?

Nick Cooper, Joint Head of Talent and Skills, drafted 05.05.2026, revised and signed off 17.07.2026

Submitting the form

You need to [submit the form to the central repository](#)

EIAs for the International Science Partnership Funds should be emailed to: ISPF@ukri.org



Change log

Include changes as you've reviewed the EIA. For example, based on input received from x at the announcement of opportunity stage, x was added

Name	Date	Version	Change
Nick Cooper	05.05.2026	1	First draft
Nick Cooper	17.07.2026	2	Updated to reflect revised timeline and process before opportunity launch
Nick Cooper	30.07.2026	3	Minor formatting edits

Action plan

Add the actions you intend to take (or have taken) to address the negative impact you have identified. Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).

Action	Deadline	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is the outcome?