



Economic and Social Research Council
North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership



+3/+2 Studentship Application Guidance
For October 2019 entry

Introduction

This document is intended for those who wish to apply to the Universities of Keele, Lancaster, Liverpool or Manchester for an Economic and Social Research Centre (ESRC) postgraduate award under the North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership (NWSSDTP) scheme to support doctoral study in Social Sciences from September/October 2019. The guidance below sets out the types of awards provided, eligibility for awards and the application process.

This guidance is for candidates who are applying for funding towards doctoral study only. If you intend to apply for funding towards a master's and a PhD, please refer to the 1+3/2+2 guidance on the NWSSDTP website.

It is crucial that you read this guidance carefully before making your application.

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Types of Awards

This guidance is for candidates who are applying for funding towards doctoral study only. If you intend to apply for funding towards a master's and a PhD, please refer to the 1+3 guidance on the NWSSDTP website. The NWSSDTP does not fund standalone master's programmes.

The ESRC-funded NWSSDTP provides funding to enable students to study at Keele University, Lancaster University, the University of Liverpool or the University of Manchester.

+3 Scheme (Three Years Doctoral Study)

This scheme will provide support for up to three years of full-time study, or six years of part-time study, on a programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree.

+2 Scheme (Two Years Doctoral Study)

This scheme is as the +3 scheme, but for students who are already in the first year of their doctoral study at one of the four eligible universities. Such students may apply for support for two years of full-time study, or four years of part-time study, on a programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree. Students who have completed more than one year full-time study (or two years part-time) are not eligible to apply for funding.

Eligibility

Academic eligibility:

For +2 and +3 studentship applications, candidates must have qualifications of the standard of a good undergraduate honours degree at first or upper second class level and a suitable master's degree.

In the majority of cases, candidates will have undertaken an undergraduate course and master's course at a recognised UK higher education institution. However, some may have qualifications from outside the UK, or be able to offer a combination of qualifications and/or experience. It will be necessary to ascertain whether these qualifications can be equated to an honours degree, and at what level. The ESRC bases its assessments of qualifications attained outside the UK on the British Council's NARIC guide. For non-UK qualifications transcripts in English as well as details in the original language must be provided with the application form.

Candidates must be planning to study in an ESRC recognised pathways (see Appendix 1 for a list of recognised pathways for the NWSSDTP).

Please note that the supervisory fit of your prospective supervision team will be taken into consideration when the application is assessed during the competition.

Residential eligibility:

The legal basis for defining residence eligibility for postgraduate training awards is set down in the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1991. The guidance below is based on the Regulations and on guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES):

Candidates for awards must have a relevant connection with the United Kingdom. A relevant connection may be established if, at the start of the course:

- The student has been ordinarily resident in the UK throughout the 3-year period preceding the date of application for an award, *and*
- Has not been resident in the UK, during any part of that 3-year period wholly or mainly for the purposes of full-time education (EU students – see below) *and*

- Has settled status in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971 (i.e. is not subject to any restriction on the period for which he/she may stay).

Candidates who meet all three of the above criteria may apply for a *full award*.

A relevant connection may be established for an **EU student** if the student has been resident in the UK throughout the 3-year period preceding the start of the course, even if for purposes of full-time education. EU students in this situation may apply for a *full award*. EU Students who have not been ordinarily resident in the UK for the last three years may apply for a *fees only award*.

Non-EU International students who have not been ordinarily resident in the UK for the last three years are not eligible to apply. The only exceptions to this rule are international students who are applying to the Economics pathway or whose project is deemed to employ Advanced Quantitative Methods (please see below for definition of AQM) – they are eligible to apply for a full award. However, please note that there are restrictions on the number of international students that the NWSSDTP can recruit to these areas.

For more information on residential eligibility please see: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/studentships/esrc-students/>

Financial basis of the awards

An NWSSDTP Studentship consists of:

- Payment of academic fees, at the standard UKRI rate
- Maintenance Stipend (£14,777 in 2018, exact rate for 2019 subject to confirmation from UKRI)
- Access to a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) for reimbursement of research related expenses including - but not limited to - conference attendance, training courses and UK fieldwork.
- Opportunity to apply for additional funding towards:
 - Overseas Fieldwork (only if the need for overseas fieldwork has been detailed at the application stage) and Difficult Language Training,
 - Overseas Institutional Visits
 - Internships

Students opting to study part time will receive a pro rata maintenance grant of the equivalent of a full time award.

Students who specify in their original application that their doctoral project will require fieldwork and/or Difficult Language Training may also submit a claim for additional financial support to enable them to undertake this, once they have commenced their studies. For more information on this please refer to the NWSSDTP web pages. Fieldwork and Difficult Language Training funding can only be claimed at doctoral level, not during master's.

Fees Only Awards for eligible EU students constitutes the payment of tuition fees and eligibility to apply for RTSG, Fieldwork, OIV and Internship funding.

Students will receive additional Disabled Student Allowance where appropriate.

Priority Areas and Specialised Training Routes

The ESRC have awarded the NWSSDTP 12 steered awards each year in the following *Priority Areas*:

- Advanced Quantitative Methods (4 awards)
- Use of ESRC data sets (4 awards)
- Interdisciplinary research, which straddles other research council remits (4 awards)

It is important that the NWSSDTP takes up the full complement of awards made in Priority Areas each year. To encourage full take up of these awards, the NWSSDTP is able to offer enhanced stipends of £3000 per annum to students whose projects align with the following *Specialised Training Routes* identified by the ESRC as strengths within the consortium, which fit within the Priority Areas above:

- AQM
- Longitudinal Data Analysis (for Use of ESRC Data sets)
- Data Science (for Interdisciplinary research, which straddles other research council remits)

We also encourage students to identify if their proposed project fits into a Priority Area, but does not fall in one of the Specialised Training Routes outlined above. In these cases, if the candidate is successful an enhanced stipend will not be payable, but the application will be considered positively in terms of fit with a priority area.

The Application Process

Students will normally be expected to have been offered a place at one of the four NWSSDTP institutions before submitting their NWSSDTP Studentship Application, on one of the programmes eligible for NWSSDTP funding (please see the NWSSDTP website for a list of eligible programmes for each pathway). However, Studentship Applications will be accepted from students who have submitted their institutional application but have yet to receive a formal offer, providing that such an offer has been made by the time of the Studentship Allocation meeting, which will take place on the 13th March 2019. In no case will an NWSSDTP Studentship be officially awarded until the student has secured a conditional or unconditional place at their university.

You should apply to one institution for admission onto your chosen postgraduate programme using the online application forms:

Keele: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/pgresearch/howtoapply/>

Lancaster: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/how-to-apply-for-postgraduate-study/>

Liverpool: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/applying/>

Manchester: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduate/howtoapply/>

! Applicants must contact their School PGR Administrators prior to completing their admissions or NWSSDTP Studentship application forms, as some schools have local internal deadlines. Please find contact details here: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/how-to-apply/submitting-apps/>

Copies of transcripts and references included in your original programme application will also be required for your NWSSDTP Studentship application. Please see Appendix 2 for referee guidance – it is advised that potential referees are sent a copy of this document when approached for a reference.

Closing Date

You should send a digital copy (not a paper copy) of the completed NWSSDTP application form with your transcripts and references to the relevant School PGR Administrator (see [here](#)) by **5pm on 4th February 2019**.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Please ensure you complete and submit an EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING FORM with your application. This will not be made available to those reviewing your funding application, but will be used to survey equality and diversity of applicants and our funded students.

Assessment of Applications

a. Panels

Your application will initially be assessed by the **Institutional Pathway Panel**. The panel consists of senior academics from within the relevant pathway at the institution you intend to register. Each application is judged on its own merits based on the information provided in the NWSSDTP Application Form and your transcripts / references. This panel agrees a mark for each application and applications are then ranked.

The Institutional Pathway Panels will then present their top applicants at a **NWSSDTP Pathway Panel**. This consists of one nominated pathway lead from each NWSSDTP institution. This panel decided which applications will go through the final committee panel.

Finally, the applications which have passed the previous two stages are presented to the **NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee** by the overall pathway lead. This committee will then decide on studentship allocation across the NWSSDTP. This NWSSDTP Studentship Committee will take place on the 13th March 2019.

b. Outcome of Application

Successful candidates will be informed by email by 22nd March 2019. If you are successful in being nominated for an award, you will be asked to confirm by the 12th April 2019 whether or not you wish to formally accept the award. If you do not confirm by this date, the NWSSDTP reserves the right to reallocate the award.

The NWSSDTP Studentship Committee and the pathway leads will also agree a list of **reserve candidates**, and reserve candidates will also be informed by the 22nd March 2019. If you are selected as a reserve candidate you may still be offered an award should one of the successful candidates decline their award / fail to formally accept their award.

Candidates who reach the NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee stage but are **unsuccessful** will also be informed by the 22nd March 2019. Due to the volume of applications, individual feedback will not be available.

Candidates who do not reach the NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee stage should be notified by their local School PGR Administrator. If you do not receive confirmation of the outcome of your application by the 22nd March 2019, please contact your relevant School PGR Administrator (see [here](#)) for further information.

c. Taking up an Award

Award holders will normally be expected to begin their programme of study in September or October 2019 and, providing we have received all necessary paperwork, holders of a full award will receive the first instalment of their maintenance grant in early October.

In certain circumstances, such as illness or where there is a need to give a period of notice to an employer, we will consider deferring the start date of a doctoral programme, normally by up to three months (subject to approval from the School PG office). Any application for postponement must be made immediately through the University in which you intend to register. You should write to the University, in advance, including supporting letters from your potential supervisor. Deferrals of twelve months or more are not permissible.

If you are unable to take up your award in the year in which it was awarded, it will be rescinded and you will have to re-apply in the competition in the following year. You will need to inform us of your decision at the earliest possible stage, in writing, by letter or e-mail.

Progression from master's to doctoral study for 1+3 candidates will be subject to the successful completion of the master's programme.

The continuation of doctoral awards is subject to the submission of a satisfactory annual report at the end of each year of the award and you are subject to the University and School's standard monitoring and progression processes.

d. Change in circumstances

Studentships are awarded for a particular programme of study at the University of Keele, Liverpool, Lancaster or Manchester. Therefore all requests to make changes to the awards are only considered by the NWSSDTP Academic Management Committee in exceptional circumstances and only if the reasons are fully and clearly explained.

e. Resubmitting Applications

If you are unsuccessful in one year's competition you may apply in the next year's competition, without prejudice, providing you continue to meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

Application Timetable

4 th Feb 2019	Deadline for submission of application to relevant School PGR Administrator (see here)
1 st Mar 2019	Deadline for Pathway Panels to forward final candidates and ranking
13 th Mar 2019	NWSSDTP Studentship Committee
By 22 nd Mar 2019	Successful, Reserve and Unsuccessful Candidates informed by email
12 th April 2019	Deadline for successful candidates to confirm acceptance of the award
Sep/Oct 2019	New NWSSDTP Cohort start
November 2019	New NWSSDTP Cohort Induction Residential

Guidance Notes for Standard Studentship Application Form

Please carefully follow the instructions below to complete your application form.

1. Studentships available

Please tick the scheme you would like to apply for.

2. Institution at which you intend to register

Please tick the University in which you intend to register.

3. Name and address

We need to be able to contact you between March and September 2019. Under 'Address' you should provide the address at which you can be contacted for the majority of this period, even if this is different to the address you have given on the University application form. Should you be unavailable during this period, you may provide the name and address of someone who can correspond for you in your absence. Similarly, please give an email address and phone number which you can be contacted on between March and September 2019.

4. Project details

- Award type: Fees only or Full award

Please see residency eligibility on page 2 above for more details.

- Mode of attendance

Part time students are only eligible for the maintenance grant on a pro-rata basis. Further information on awards and stipends can be found on page 3 above.

- NWSSDTP Pathway/School/Institution

Please indicate the NWSSDTP pathway you are applying to, which must be one of the accredited pathways as listed in Appendix 1. Also include the School and Institution with which you intend to register. If you are uncertain about any of these details, please discuss this with your School PGR Administrator (see [here](#)).

- Project title

The appropriate title of the project should be entered.

5. PhD Proposal

Please give details of your PhD proposal in 1500 words or less. The NWSSDTP reserve the right to disqualify applications which exceed this word limit. Referencing/bibliography should be included within this word limit.

6. Qualifications

Please enter your relevant academic qualifications. As stated above, candidates must have qualifications of the standard of a good undergraduate honours degree at first or upper second class level, and a master's degree.

7. Relevant Experience

Please complete this section by entering the number of years of experience and give details. The assessors will use this information to establish any experience you have had which might contribute to the intended research topic or strengthen your application.

8. Supervision

Please state who your prospective supervisors are. This should have been discussed with the prospective supervisors prior to application. The supervisory fit of your prospective supervision team will be taken into consideration when the application is assessed during the competition.

9. Research training previously undertaken

Please include a brief description of the relevant research training previously undertaken which will support your proposed research project.

10. Research Training and Support Needs

Please give details of any identified training needs for your doctoral programme which will equip and enable you to undertake your proposed research project. Candidates are expected to undertake appropriate training during their PhD, and demonstrating an awareness of the training required/available will strengthen your application. State whether or not this has been discussed with your supervisors.

Please clearly indicate whether you intend to do fieldwork abroad or learn a difficult language during your doctoral programme. Please indicate the destination and the duration of fieldwork if known at this stage. Only students who specify potential fieldwork in their original application will be eligible to apply for additional fieldwork funding during their studentship. Only students who specify potential difficult language training in their original application will have the opportunity to make a case for a fieldwork / studentship extension to accommodate this.

Please discuss with your supervisor whether your project is likely to require sourcing additional funding (£1000 or more) for the purchase of specialist equipment, specific software or access to datasets, without which the project could not be completed.

11. Priority Areas and Specialised Training Routes

Please refer to the guidance, and read the NWSSDTP Guide to Specialised Training Routes, available at <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/how-to-apply/priority-areas-and-specialised-training-routes/>

Please detail if you think your project will utilise **Advanced Quantitative Methods** and what training you will undertake during your doctoral programme to enable this. Please be sure to address each of the three criterion which are used to assess AQM. Failure to do so will significantly reduce the likelihood of AQM status being awarded. Students classified as AQM will receive an enhanced stipend. Students in receipt of AQM enhanced awards will be expected to undertake an annual review to ensure they are utilising AQM as detailed in their original application and to undertake additional training.

Please complete the **Use of ESRC Datasets** section if appropriate for your project. Only students on the Longitudinal Data Analysis Specialised Training Route within this Priority Area are eligible for an enhanced stipend.

Please complete the **Interdisciplinary research, which straddles other research council remits** section if appropriate for your project. Only students on the Data Science Specialised Training Route within this Priority Area are eligible for an enhanced stipend. For details of the remits of all the research councils please see: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/our-councils/>

Please note that an individual student can only receive one Specialised Training Route enhanced stipend.

12. CASE or Collaboration

Please only complete this section if your project incorporates a CASE or a collaborative element with a non-HEI partner organisation. Please note that before you can apply for a CASE award you must have discussed the collaboration with your supervisor, the proposed partner and your institution.

A letter of support from the partner, which briefly outlines the nature of the collaboration (corresponding with what has been outlined in 12b and 12c) should be included. If no contact has been made with a partner, please just apply for a standard studentship. Contributions for a collaborating partner can be in cash or in kind.

There is no need to complete a separate CASE Studentship Application Form.

13. Additional applications

Please indicate whether you have already applied for any other funding for this forthcoming year.

14. Acknowledgment

Please sign and date the application form. Electronic signatures are sufficient.

15. Supporting Documents

You should provide two academic references, along with your application form, and copies of your academic transcripts. These may be the same references you submitted for your University admissions application, but do not have to be. Please see Appendix 2 for referee guidance – it is advised that potential referees are sent a copy of this when approached for a reference.

Supporting documents should be in Word or PDF format – please do not send image files.

Please ensure you complete and submit an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form with your application.

No further documentation (e.g. CV, personal statements, extended research proposals) is required, and any additional documents may not be considered during the application process.

APPENDIX 1: List of NWSSDTP Accredited Pathways

NWSSDTP Studentship Applications must go through an eligible NWSSDTP Pathway:

- Accounting and Finance
- Business and Management
- Criminology, Social Policy and Social Work
- Development and Humanitarianism in an Unequal World
- Economic and Social History
- Economics
- Educational Research
- Geography and Environment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Language Based Area Studies
- Linguistics
- Planning and Environment
- Politics
- Psychology
- Social Anthropology
- Social Statistics
- Social Studies of Science, Technology and Medicine
- Socio-legal Studies
- Sociology

APPENDIX 2: Guidance Note for Referees

General

The NWSSDTP application must be supported by two testimonials from people able to comment on the academic ability and research potential of the candidate, e.g. previous undergraduate/postgraduate study.

It is strongly recommended that the applicant's undergraduate/postgraduate tutors complete the testimonials where possible. However, the NWSSDTP accepts that University staff expected to be involved with the candidate's subsequent studies (e.g. potential supervisors) can sometimes be appropriate if they have tutored the applicant previously. It is also accepted that some students may have undertaken some relevant professional work where the testimonial writer would be able to comment on their suitability for undertaking research. If this is the case then the circumstances should be fully explained.

Specific advice re the testimonial

- Potential supervisors can be a referee – but should **not** be used for both references.
- Referees should include a comment on the academic ability of the applicant (most successful NWSSDTP candidates have or are predicted a 1st in their undergraduate and a distinction in their Master's).
- Referees should comment on the candidate's suitability for postgraduate training in general and for the particular course and research he/she proposes to undertake.
- Information on how, and to what extent, the candidate has shown academic ability in terms of:
 - a) ability to grasp concepts and reason analytically;
 - b) motivation and perseverance in achieving objectives; and,
 - c) capacity for original thought.
- Where possible, the referees should comment on the research project in relation to the applicant, the supervisors and the research environment.
- References should be emphasis strengths at all times. Referees should avoid generalisations, repetitions and 'lukewarm' statements in references such as "very good student".
- Extracurricular activities should also be highlighted in references to show that the referee knows the applicant well.
- It may be useful to note the ESRC's strategic priorities for 2016-2020:
 - Mental health
 - Housing
 - Productivity
 - Understanding the macro-economy
 - Ways of being in a digital age