



The North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership ([NWSSDTP](#)) is an Economic and Social Research Centre ([ESRC](#)) funded postgraduate training consortium.

The NWSSDTP is one of 14 DTPs in the UK and brings together the Universities of [Keele](#), [Lancaster](#), [Liverpool](#) and [Manchester](#). The University of Liverpool leads on the management and administration of the consortium. Studentships are available across the full range of social science disciplines, and students have access to research expertise and training across the four constituent Universities.

This document is for academic staff appointed as a Pathway Representative or Lead, to outline the key responsibilities of the role. The document may also be useful to other members of academic and administrative staff involved in the NWSSDTP.

Pathway Representatives and Leads are encouraged to also familiar themselves with the information available to NWSSDTP-funded students. The key sources of information are the [NWSSDTP Student Handbook](#) and the [Current Students](#) pages of the website.

The NWSSDTP is governed by the regulations of the ESRC and its Postgraduate Funding Guide, the full version of which can be found at: <https://www.ukri.org/publications/esrc-postgraduate-funding-guide/>

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## Supporting Roles and Key Contacts

### **Institutional Administrative Contacts and Academic Leads**

Each institution within the NWSSDTP has its own academic lead, nominated administrative contact and senior Strategy Board member.

#### ***Keele University***

Academic Institutional Lead: Dr Fabienne Emmerich

Administrative Contact: Donna Bailey

Strategy Board Member: Professor Donna Lee - Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean

#### ***Lancaster University***

Academic Institutional Lead: Professor Céu Mateus

Administrative Contact: James Heard

Strategy Board Member: Professor Louise Heathwaite - Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)

#### ***University of Liverpool***

Academic Institutional Lead: Dr Bethan Evans

Administrative Contact: Dr Julie McColl

Strategy Board Member: Professor Fiona Beveridge - Executive Pro-Vice Chancellor, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences

#### ***University of Manchester***

Academic Institutional Lead: Professor Sue Heath

Administrative Contact: Carole Arrowsmith

Strategy Board Representative: Professor Keith Brown - Vice-President & Dean, Faculty of Humanities

### **NWSSDTP Office**

The University of Liverpool leads the management and administration of the consortium, and the central NWSSDTP office is based at Liverpool. The NWSSDTP team are:

NWSSSDTP Director: [Professor Gabe Mythen](#)

NWSSSDTP Deputy Director: [Dr Laura Radcliffe](#)

NWSSSDTP Manager: [Hayley Meloy](#)

NWSSSDTP Coordinator (Impact and Collaboration): [Julie McColl](#)

NWSSSDTP Administrator: [Sarah Elsdon](#)

Email address: [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)

## Appointment of Pathway Representatives and Lead

Each pathway at each institution will nominate a named contact, the “Pathway Representative”. The Pathway Representative will be responsible for disseminating information within their local departments, working with students and colleagues on studentship competition applications and supporting further NWSSDTP activity as appropriate. The Pathway Representative will be appointed by the appropriate Head of Department/School for the discipline, in consultation with the outgoing Pathway Representative and the Institutional Academic Lead. It would normally be expected that only one person per pathway at each institution will undertake the role, but it is advisable to pre-arrange cover in the event of an illness or sabbatical leave.

One Pathway Representative from across the institutions will be identified as the “Pathway Lead” for each pathway. Pathway Leads will be responsible for coordinating pathway activity and for representing their pathway at Studentship Allocation Committees any cross-institutional Pathway Fora. Pathway Leads will be selected by the Pathway Representatives themselves, in consultation with the NWSSDTP Manager or Director if necessary. It is expected that the role of Pathway Lead will normally rotate between institutions every two to three years.

Pathway Representatives and Pathway Leads will not be employed through the NWSSDTP, but will remain employees of nominating institution. Any adjustment to pay and conditions and/or additional access to resource are subject to negotiation between the individual and the employing institution. Expenses associated NWSSDTP activity and events should be covered by the employing institution.

## Studentship Competitions

### Introduction

The NWSSDTP allocates between 55-60 postgraduate studentships each year, to prospective candidates at the four NWSSDTP Institutions. These studentships are allocated through two annual competitions: a Supervisor-led CASE Competition in November - December, and a Student-led Standard Competition in March - April.

The **CASE Studentship Competition** considers applications from supervisors who are proposing projects to be co-supervised with a non-HEI Partner. The ESRC expects 30% of the NWSSDTP’s Studentships to include a collaborative element with private, public or third sector organisations.

CASE Studentship Application paperwork: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/collaboration/case-studentships/>

The **Standard Studentship Competition** considers applications from postgraduate candidates who are proposing their own research projects, to be undertake as a +3 studentship (PhD only) or a 1+3 / 2+2 studentship (master’s + PhD).

Standard Studentship Application paperwork: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/how-to-apply/>

Pathway Representatives and Leads are integral to the recruitment and selection process for both competitions.

## **Eligibility criteria**

Students applying to the Standard Studentship Competition, or students recruited to successful CASE Studentship projects, must meet the academic and residential eligibility criteria outlined by the ESRC.

### **Residential eligibility:**

NWSSDTP Studentships are open to both Home and International (including EU and EEA) candidates.

Please note that NWSSDTP Studentships will only fund tuition fees up to the Home rate. This is £4,596 in 2022/23 (exact rate for 2023/24 subject to confirmation from UKRI). International tuition fees are usually substantially higher than this sum. However, all institutions within the NWSSDTP have committed to waiving increased tuition fees for international NWSSDTP students. International students recruited to NWSSDTP Studentship will not be expected to pay any additional tuition fees themselves.

Please also be aware that the NWSSDTP is only permitted to award a maximum of 30% of its studentships - a maximum of 18 awards - to international (including EU and EEA) students per annum.

To be classed as a home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or#
- Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

If a candidate does not meet the criteria above, they would be classed as an International student.

Staff should refer to the UKRI Terms and Conditions for Training Grants for full details <https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

### **Academic eligibility:**

For **1+3, 2+2 and 2+3 studentships**, candidates must have qualifications of the standard of a good undergraduate honours degree at first or upper second class level. Current undergraduate students can apply during the third year of their degree, prior to completion, and will need to provide interim transcripts to support their application. 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 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 on an eligible programme and within an NWSSDTP recognised pathway. A list of eligible programmes can be found on our website: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/how-to-apply/pathways/> The supervisory fit of the prospective supervision team will be taken into consideration when the application is assessed during the competition.

For the Standard Studentship Competition, candidates should have submitted an admissions application to the University of their choice prior to submitting their funding application to the NWSSDTP. For the CASE Studentship Competition, recruited candidates will not receive formal notification of their funding award until their admissions application is successful.

### **ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines:**

The ESRC have specific expectations regarding the training a candidate should have received prior to undertaking an ESRC funded +3 (or +2) studentship, as outlined in the [ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2015](#). Please note that the new ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines, launched in 2022, will only apply from October 2024 for all new ESRC-funded studentships – the 2015 Guidelines above continue to apply for the October 2023 recruitment round.

The purpose of these guidelines is to raise the general level of skills and knowledge amongst social scientists by ensuring that they develop, and can apply, basic and advanced quantitative and qualitative research skills that are responsive to the needs of social science subject areas and disciplines, the broader science base and a wide range of users.

The manner in which the learning outcomes are achieved is expected to vary for different subject areas and disciplines and for students with varying levels of prior knowledge and experience. Pathway Representatives are expected to check that sufficient levels of training have been achieved for each +3 or +2 Studentship application which is to be put forward to the Studentship Allocation Committee. As a guide, it is expected that roughly 70% of the below expectations are met prior to a +3 studentship commencing, with the understanding that the remaining 30% can be achieved through additional training during the first year of the PhD. A +2 applicant would be expected to meet all of the below expectations.

Excellent applicants who do not have sufficient research training in line with expectations outlined below can be encouraged to retroactively apply for a 1+3 studentship instead. If successful, they would then have an additional funded year to complete an approved research training master's course prior to commencing their PhD, ensuring they can fulfil all the below expectations.

#### *1. Principles of research design*

Students must be able to understand the connection between research questions or hypotheses and the tools required to address them, and gain practical experience of applying some of those tools.

#### *2. Data collection, analysis and management*

Students must have a good understanding of both the practice and philosophies of social science research which enables them to understand the advantages and disadvantages of core research methods and apply appropriate methods to different types of research questions. Students should be made aware of the basic approaches to both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, including different ontological and epistemological perspectives.

### 3. *Core subject-specific training*

Core subject-specific training refers to compulsory training within a subject area. It remains a fundamental element of training for social science researchers.

### 4. *General research skills*

These include:

- Bibliographic and computing skills
- Teaching and other work experience
- Language skills
- Ethical and legal issues

### 5. *Transferable skills*

These include:

- Communication and networking skills
- Leadership, research management and relationship management
- Personal and career development

## **Financial basis of the awards**

An NWSSDTP Studentship consists of:

- Payment of academic fees, at the standard UKRI Home rate
- Maintenance Stipend (full-time: £17,668, part-time: £8,834 for 2022/23)
- 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.

CASE Students may receive additional funding from the non-HEI Partner.

Students will receive additional Disabled Student Allowance where appropriate.

## **Priority Areas**

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

- Advanced Quantitative Methods (4 awards)
- Use of Datasets (4 awards) – the NWSSDTP particularly welcomes applications to this Priority Area which focus on Longitudinal Data Analysis.
- Interdisciplinary research which straddles other research council remits (4 awards) – the NWSSDTP particularly welcomes applications to this Priority Area which focus on Data Science.

We encourage students to identify if their proposed project fits into a Priority Area, as this may strengthen their application and will be considered positively in terms of fit with a priority area. Further details on the Priority Areas can be found in this [Guide to NWSSDTP Priority Areas](#)

## **Selection Process**

Pathway Representatives and Leads are responsible for assessing all eligible applications submitted to either the CASE or Standard Studentship competitions.

Applications will initially be assessed by an ***Institutional Pathway Panel***. This stage can be omitted in the CASE Competition for any pathways which receive a small number of applications, as long as all Pathway Representatives agree to this. The Institutional Pathway Panel should be convened by the Pathway Representative, and should consist of at least three senior academics from within the relevant subject pathway within the institution. Each application should be judged on its own merits based on the information provided in the application form and supporting documents. The panel should agree a score for each application and then rank the applications.

The Institutional Pathway Panel should then present their top applicants to an ***NWSSDTP Pathway Panel***. This should be convened by the Pathway Lead and should consist of all the Pathway Representatives for that pathway. It is expected that the pathway panel will be constituted by a face-to-face meeting. In exceptional circumstances remote electronic meetings are acceptable provided that all pathway representatives are in prior agreement with this course of action. This panel will review the applications, agree which applications will go through the final stage, and agree a ranking for those applications. The internal scores awarded at the Institutional Pathway Panel and the academic merit of shortlisted applications should be discussed. The panel should avoid 'joint' ranks, even when two or more candidates have the same score, as these are very likely to be queried - and the Pathway Lead asked to differentiate - at the final stage.

Finally, the applications which pass the previous two stages will be presented to the ***NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee*** by the Pathway Lead. The Studentship Allocation Committee will then decide on studentship allocation across the NWSSDTP.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Institutional Pathway Panel Members**

Institutional Pathway Panels should be organised by the Pathway Representative in each institution. These panels will usually consist of a Panel Chair (the Pathway Representative) and at least two further Panel Members (senior academic colleagues from within the relevant pathway). This stage may be omitted during the CASE Competition, if all Pathway Representatives agree, when only a small number of applications are received (i.e. where there are so few applications for the pathway, it is feasible for the NWSSDTP Pathway Panel to review them all without prior filtering being necessary).

### **Panel Chair (usually the Pathway Representative in the institution)**

The role of the Pathway Panel Chair is to preside over the institutional pathway panel, ensuring that it completes the assessment according to the ESRC NWSSDTP awards assessment criteria (see page 9 below), whilst ensuring that the universities are compliant with ESRC rules and regulations. The chair must try to ensure that the overall, strategic aims of the pathway, schools and universities are considered when making the final judgement on selection. In addition to this role, Panel Chairs also function as panel assessors (see below).

### **Panel Members (academic colleagues from within the pathway)**

The role of a panel member is to use their professional judgement to assess the quality of an applicant's submission according to the ESRC NWSSDTP assessment criteria (see page 9 below). They should reach a collective decision, and award a single score for each submission received by their pathway panel.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of NWSSDTP Pathway Panel Members**

NWSSDTP Pathway Panels should be organised by the Pathway Lead. These panels should consist of one representative from each institution, usually the Pathway Representatives.

#### **Panel Chair (usually the Pathway Lead)**

The role of the Pathway Lead is to act as chair, presiding over the NWSSDTP Pathway Panel and ensuring that it comes to a unanimous decision regarding the candidates that are to be put forward, and the order in which they are ranked. The Pathway Lead will also be responsible for:

- ensuring a cover sheet is completed for each candidate who is to be put forward to the final committee,
- forwarding all documents for final candidates to the NWSSDTP central office,
- presenting the chosen applications at the NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee and answering any questions the committee has about the individual candidates.

In addition to this role, the Chair will also function as a Panel Member (see below).

#### **Panel Members (usually the Pathway Representatives from each institution)**

The role of the Pathway Representative is to present the applications brought forward from their own Institutional Pathway Panel, assess these objectively in conjunction with the applications brought forward from the other institutions, and co-operate with other panel members to produce a list of ranked applications, to be taken forward to the NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

Where a Pathway Representative or Lead is the primary applicant on a CASE Studentship Application within their pathway, they should excuse themselves from the selection process entirely and arrange for a colleague to cover the role. Pathway Representatives and Leads do not need to excuse themselves when they are the primary supervisor on a Standard Studentship Application.

If a Pathway Representative or Lead has another potential conflict of interest (e.g. a personal or familial relationship with an applicant) they should declare this to their fellow Pathway Representatives at the outset of the allocation process, to agree how best to proceed. Advice can be sought from NWSSDTP Institutional Academic Leads, the NWSSDTP Director or the NWSSDTP Manager if needed.

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

In order to reflect and promote the ethos and values of the consortium, we actively encourage applications from students from backgrounds that are currently under-represented within the ESRC NWSSDTP and in postgraduate research within Higher Education in the UK more broadly.

We are committed to supporting individuals from communities that have historically been marginalised and discouraged from progressing to academic research through structurally embedded forms of exclusion and bias. Our goal is to address imbalances and to proactively promote and embed equality of opportunity, through a series of policies and measures which form our EDI strategy. This includes outreach work across education facilities, communities and networks, a concentrated focus on advertising and soliciting part time applications, and the introduction of three directed studentships to be awarded annually to students from Global Majority communities\*. Applicants wishing to be considered for these directed studentships have the opportunity to identify Global Majority affiliation on the NWSSDTP application form.

\*Global Majority: A collective term for over 80% of the world's population who do not consider themselves, or are not considered to be white, therefore referring to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been previously referred to as "ethnic minorities".

It is expected that Pathway Representatives and Leads will actively consider matters of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion while undertaking the ranking and selection processes, as well as pay due attention – and calling out where necessary – the impact of unconscious bias within the review process. In practice, this should include (but is not limited to) taking account of mitigating circumstances noted in application paperwork, and giving due weighting in track record scores to candidates who have relevant experience alongside less-than-excellent academic grades. Pathway Representatives and Leads are also expected to contribute to the wider discussion of EDI matters across the NWSSDTP. UKRI's strategy, principles and expectations in relation to EDI is outlined on their [Equality, diversity and inclusion webpages](#).

## **Assessment Procedure**

Please note that the deadlines for both the CASE and Standard Competitions should be strictly adhered to by Pathway Representatives and Leads, and any applications that come in after the deadlines regrettably cannot not be accepted. ***Similarly, no changes should be made to applications after the deadline by Pathway Representatives/Leads or applicants.***

The panels will assess the application paperwork, adhering to the below criteria. Panel Members and Chairs will be asked to complete a coversheet for each application received by their pathway panel. For the Standard Competition, this will require scoring each candidates from 1-10 (10 being the highest) on both the applicant's track record and proposal. For the CASE Competition, this will only require a ranking to be agreed.

The Institutional Pathway Panel should decide which candidates will be taken forward to the NWSSDTP Pathway Panel. It is the responsibility of the Pathway Representatives to ensure that all documentation regarding the candidates going forward (coversheets, applications etc.) is circulated to other panel members prior to the NWSSDTP Pathway Panel. If an Institutional Pathway Panel doesn't take place during the CASE Competition, it is still the responsibility of the Pathway Representative to ensure that all documentation regarding the candidates going forward is circulated to other panel members prior to the NWSSDTP Pathway Panel.

On the basis of the Institutional Pathway Panel guidance, the NWSSDTP Pathway Panel should decide upon their potential allocation of ESRC awards, as well as agreeing a reserve list. It is the responsibility of the Panel Chair to take note of the meeting, ensure that the final ranked list is collectively agreed by the panel and subsequently report the outcome to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk) by the relevant deadline. A new cover sheet should be completed for the applications going forward, which records the NWSSDTP Pathway Panel scores, ranks and reflections.

In the Standard Competition, each pathway (unless otherwise notified) may submit a **maximum of four** applications to the final NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee. Pathways may submit more than four applications where the additional candidates are eligible for one of the Global Majority directed studentships (see the section on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion above) There is currently no limit on the number of applications each pathway can put forward for the CASE Competition.

Professional Services colleagues will check independently that all successful applications meet ESRC and universities' residential and academic criteria before compiling rankings and applications to forward to the overall NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee.

The members of the NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee (NWSSDTP Director, NWSSDTP Deputy Director plus the four Institutional Academic Leads) will review all the forwarded applications prior to the Allocation Committee. Pathway Leads will attend the Allocation Committee to answer questions from the committee. The committee will then reach a decision regarding the allocation of funding on the basis of the application paperwork, supporting documents and the additional information provided by the Pathway Leads.

### **Assessment Criteria for the Standard Studentship Competition**

Pathways will score each candidate a mark on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest, 1 the lowest) on each of two criteria:

- a. The candidate's **track record** (evidence of quality of the applicant), based on (i) career information provided in the application, including information on marks achieved so far as reported in the references and/or transcripts; (ii) the quality of the references themselves. The score will also reflect the applicant's description of how his/her previous experience (academic and professional) has prepared him/her for postgraduate study, and the applicant's description of how the programme of study will contribute to his/her long-term career plans.

- b. The quality of the research proposal, judged in terms of (i) cogency of exposition - i.e. does the proposal make sense and seem feasible; (ii) originality. This should be judged relative to the stage of the applicant. Subject panel members should be aware that +3 applicants may have more detailed and cohesive proposals than 1+3 applicants. Likewise, +2 applicants may have a more developed proposal than +3, as a result of commencing the programme.

In deciding on borderline candidates, panels may wish to make a judgement on pathway 'fit' – i.e. is this the sort of work that belongs in this particular pathway, in terms of library/archival resources, supervisory expertise, etc.

Detailed criteria are given below, to ensure that panels use approximately the same spread of marks. These criteria should be used flexibly: for example, if a PhD candidate has performed well at MA level but much less well at UG, but the latter is explained by referees as the result of unusual circumstances, more weight should be given to the former, and indeed the latter might be set aside altogether.

### **Detailed criteria: +3/+2 Applications**

#### Track-record

- 7-10 Scores in this range will require EITHER a first class degree OR an already achieved distinction at master's level (or overseas equivalents) OR clear evidence that the applicant has the potential to reach that level. A mark of 7 would correspond to a marginal first/distinction (i.e. a combination of high 60s and very low 70s); a mark of 8 would correspond to a secure first/distinction, predominantly in the range 70-5; a mark of 9 would correspond to a high first/distinction, with marks in the range 75-80; and a mark of 10 to an exceptional distinction, predominantly at 80+. Where these academic grades are not met, a candidate would have strong relevant professional experience in order to achieve a rank score of 7-10.
- 3-6 Scores in this range will require a 2.1 OR an already achieved Merit at master's level OR clear evidence that the applicant has the potential to reach that level. A mark of 6 should correspond to a very high 2.1/Merit, just short of a first/distinction - this should typically include some marks of 70+; a mark of 5 should correspond to a good 2.1/Merit, with marks in the mid-60s but rarely if at all reaching 70; a 4 should correspond to a middling 2.1/Merit, and a 3 to a low 2.1/Merit.
- 1-2 A Pass at master's level - i.e. marks typically in the high 50s (2) or low 50s (1) OR clear evidence that the applicant has the potential to reach that level. We would be very unlikely to support candidates with 2.2s, unless the first degree result was an aberration explained by the referees, or if they have high graded master's to enhance this.

#### Quality of the Research Proposal

The assessors will look for evidence of an ability to articulate a research project, a coherent and well thought-out plan for doctoral study, and a good awareness of the place of their research within the current field whilst bearing in mind the current stage of the applicant in their research program:

- 7-10 Coherent proposal scoring well in terms of both cogency and originality. The proposal evaluates and succeeds in the following areas: quality and feasibility of the research question, engagement with the field, methodology and critical appreciation of sources. A mark of 10 should be reserved for an exceptionally eye-catching and original proposal, but marks of 7-9 will indicate strongly supportable projects.
- 3-6 A promising proposal with some limited weaknesses that need to be addressed. Projects in this range are potentially supportable.
- 1-2 Problematic proposal – would need further work before it could be firmly supported.

## Detailed criteria: 1+3/2+2/2+3 applicants

### Track-record

- 7-10 Scores in this range will require an already achieved first or clear evidence that the applicant has the potential to reach that level. Typically a score of 10 will indicate a student regularly achieving marks of 80+; a score of 9 will correspond to marks in the range 75-80; a score of 8 to a secure first with marks predominantly in the low 70s; and a score of 7 to a marginal first, with marks in the high 60s and low 70s. Where these academic grades are not met, a candidate would have very strong compensatory relevant professional experience in order to achieve a rank score of 7-10.
- 3-6 Scores in this range will require an already achieved 2.1 OR clear evidence that the applicant has the potential to reach that level. A score of 6 should typically include some marks touching 70+; a mark of 5 should correspond to a good 2.1, with marks in the mid-60s but rarely if at all reaching 70; a 4 should correspond to a middling 2.1; and a 3 to a low 2.1. Where these academic grades are not met, a candidate would be expected to have strong compensatory relevant professional experience.
- 1-2 A candidate who seems unlikely to achieve a 2.1. We would be very unlikely to support candidates who have already been awarded 2.2s, unless the first degree result was an aberration explained by the referees, or if they have high graded master's to enhance this and/or strong compensatory relevant professional experience to enhance this.

### Quality of the Research Proposal

The assessors will look for evidence of an ability to articulate a research project, a coherent and well thought-out plan for future doctoral study, and a good awareness of the place of their research within the current field whilst bearing in mind the current stage of the applicant in their research program. The assessors should also consider the applicant's choice of master's and their comments on how this will prepare them for their proposed doctoral project:

- 7-10 Coherent proposal scoring well in terms of both cogency and originality. The proposal evaluates and succeeds in the following areas: quality and feasibility of the research question, engagement with the field, methodology and critical appreciation of sources. A mark of 10 should be reserved for an exceptionally eye-catching and original proposal, but marks of 7-9 will indicate strongly supportable projects. The candidate shows strong awareness of the training they will require to undertake the project, and how the chosen master's will provide this.
- 3-6 A promising proposal with some limited weaknesses that need to be addressed. Projects in this range are potentially supportable. The candidate shows some awareness of the training they will require to undertake the project, and how the chosen master's will provide this.
- 1-2 Problematic proposal – would need further work before it could be firmly supported.

## Assessment Criteria for the CASE Studentship Competition

Pathways are not required to 'score' CASE Studentship Applications, and as such there is no detailed scoring criteria. However, the applications do need to be assessed and ranked.

There is often no candidate associated with a CASE Studentship Application, so it is not possible to take account of track record. It is possible to take account of quality of the relationship with, and contribution from, the non-HEI Project Partner. Pathways should take account of the *demonstrable*

quality of the relationship with, and contribution from, the non-HEI Partner including (but not necessarily limited to):

- evidence of reciprocal benefits for the Department/University - student - supervisor - non-HEI partner;
- a strong track-record of previous collaboration between the Academic Lead and the non-HEI Partner;
- evidence of existing relations and/or collaboration between the Academic Lead and the non-HEI Partner;
- the nature and quality of the contribution being offered by the non-HEI Partner (to the proposed research, supervision, training);
- evidence of the non-HEI Partner's involvement in and contribution to the conception, design and planning of the proposed research.

The Letter of Support from the non-HEI Partner should contain evidence of the above but Pathways should also look for corroborating evidence across the entire proposal.

The quality of the research proposal should be assessed along similar lines as the discussed above, for the Standard Studentship Competition.

### **Supervisory Experience**

The proposed primary supervisor - for either CASE or the Standard Competition - will normally be expected to have a track-record of successfully supervising PhD candidates to completion. If there are compelling reasons to propose a less experienced primary supervisor, such reasons should be explicitly set out and explained on the application form. In such circumstances, it will also be necessary to propose an experienced secondary supervisor who will be expected to assume substantial supervisory responsibilities in addition to serving as a mentor to the proposed primary supervisor for the duration of the project. Where such arrangements are being proposed they should also be explicitly highlighted by the institution on the cover/ranking sheet that accompanies the application.

### **Pathway Leads attending the CASE Studentship Allocation Committee**

Each Pathway Lead will be asked to speak about the applications put forward by their pathway. They will have ten minutes at most. The members of the CASE Studentship Allocation Committee will have read the cover sheets provided and the applications in full. As such, there is no need to reiterate the details of the research proposal itself. However, it will help the committee to know (as relevant):

- How the pathway approached the review of the applications, and how they arrived at the ranking;
- Were there any clear distinctions between the rankings i.e. is there a significant gap in quality between the second and third ranked applications, or was the quality of the applications largely consistent;
- Comments on supervisory/departmental arrangements and fit of the individual applications;
- Timeliness / relevance of the project within the specific field;
- Fit with ESRC Priority Areas;
- Strength of the partnership with the non-HEI organisation
  - Does this tie in to any wider university strategies or projects?;
  - Is this an existing partnership, or the development of a new initiative?;

- Is the financial contribution appropriate, for the type of partner organisation and the project?
  - A third sector partner would not necessarily be expected to provide funding, but is the in-kind contribution sufficient?;
  - If a large private sector company isn't providing any cash contributions, is there a good reason?
- If a student has already been identified, why are they the right student for the project and how involved have they been in the development of the project?

This is not an exhaustive list, but provides an indication of the kind of information that will be helpful to the CASE Studentship Allocation Committee.

### **Pathway Leads attending the Standard Studentship Allocation Committee**

Each Pathway Lead will be asked to speak about the applications put forward by their pathway. They will have ten minutes at most. The members of the Standard Studentship Allocation Committee will have read the cover sheets provided and the applications in full. As such, there is no need to reiterate the details of the research proposal itself. However, it will help the committee to know (as relevant):

- How the pathway approached the review of the applications, and how they arrived at the ranking;
- Were there any clear distinctions between the rankings i.e. is there a significant gap in quality between the second and third ranked applications, or was the quality of the applications largely consistent;
- Comments on supervisory/departmental arrangements and fit of the individual applications;
- Timeliness / relevance of the project within the specific field;
- Fit with ESRC Priority Areas;
- Any mitigating circumstances/relevant background information for candidates whose academic track record does not appear 'excellent' on paper.

This is not an exhaustive list, but provides an indication of the kind of information that will be helpful to the Standard Studentship Allocation Committee.

## CASE Studentship Schedule for 2022-23

1st Nov  
2022

- Deadline for **Candidates** to submit completed CASE Studentship Applications to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)

4th Nov  
2022

- **NWSSDTP Office** collate and forward applications to Pathways

- Pathways must undertake a review and (where relevant) selection process which involves all institutional pathway representatives. The nature of this review is at the discretion of the pathway, although a similar process to the standard studentship competition is recommended

30th Nov  
2022

- Deadline for **overall Pathway Leads** to forward their decisions and completed cover sheets to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)

12th Dec  
2022

- NWSSDTP CASE Studentship Allocation Committee

by 16th  
Dec 2022

- Communication of results to Pathways and Candidates by **NWSSDTP Office**

- **Successful Candidates** - whose projects do not already have a nominated student - to undertake recruitment, with support from the **Institutional Pathway Representatives**. Advertising should be supported by local School and Faculty offices.

- The **overall Pathway Lead** should review and formally sign their approval of the choice of candidate on the CASE Student Nomination Form prior to submission. This form should be completed in all cases, including when a student was nominated on the original CASE Application Form.

28th April  
2023

- Deadline for **Successful Candidates (Primary Supervisor)** to notify NWSSDTP of chosen candidates by submitting the CASE Student Nomination Form to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)

by 30th  
Sept 2023

- **Successful Candidates (Primary Supervisor)** to develop formal agreements between project partners, recruited students and the University in liaison with their University's **Research Support Office** and send to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)

## Standard Studentship Schedule for 2022-23

1st Feb  
2023

- Deadline for **Candidates** to submit applications to [School Administrators](#)

By 6th Feb  
2023

- **School Administrators** (a) check eligibility and University admissions application status, (b) combine documents into a single PDF per Candidate, then (c) forward to the relevant [Institutional Pathway Representatives](#)

w/c 13th  
Feb 2023

- Institutional Pathway Panel (to be arranged by **Institutional Pathway Representative**)

w/c 20th  
Feb 2023

- Overall NWSSDTP Pathway Panel (to be arranged by **overall Pathway Lead**)

27th Feb  
2023

- Deadline for **overall Pathway Leads** to forward final Candidates' full applications, cover sheets and rankings to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)

By 10th  
March 2023

- **Institutional Pathway Representatives** (or their supporting **School Administrators**) should notify those Candidates who have not been put forward to the final Allocation Committee.

21st March  
2023

- NWSSDTP Standard Studentship Allocation Committee (**overall Pathway Leads** to attend remotely via zoom)

by 28th  
March 2023

- Successful, Reserve and Unsuccessful Candidates informed by email of outcome by **NWSSDTP Office**
- Pathways notified of results by **NWSSDTP Office**

6th April  
2023

- Deadline for Formal Funding Offer Letters to be sent by HEI **DTP Nominated Contacts**

20th April  
2023

- Deadline for **Candidates** to confirm acceptance of award. The NWSSDTP reserves the right to re-allocate awards after this date, if acceptance is not confirmed.

## Postdoctoral Fellowships

The NWSSDTP has been awarded funding by the ESRC to support seven Postdoctoral Fellowships per annum, which must take place at one of the four NWSSDTP Institutions.

The Postdoctoral Fellowship (PDF) Scheme is aimed at providing a career development opportunity for those in the immediately postdoctoral stage of their career, to provide the opportunity to consolidate their PhD through developing publications, their networks, and their research and professional skills.

The call is open to applicants who have completed their PhD at a research organisation that is part of a DTP or CDT (not necessarily the NWSSDTP) and who are within 12 months of completing their PhD. At the submission deadline, the applicant must either have been awarded a PhD or have submitted their thesis and passed their viva voce with minor corrections, with the expectation that the PhD will be awarded by the fellowship start date.

PDF Guidance, FAQs and Application Forms can be found here: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/pdf-scheme/>

The NWSSDTP runs a two stage application process for ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships. Applicants must first submit an Expression of Interest and Equal Opportunities form by the 25th January 2023. Successful applicants will be notified by the 9th February, and invited to submit a full application by the 23rd March 2023. Full applications will only be accepted from candidates who first submitted a successful EOI.

Pathway Representatives and Leads will be asked to assist with reviewing and ranking (if necessary) the applications received to their pathway after this date, and completing a cover sheet for each application. Pathway Leads will not be required to attend the PDF Allocation Committee. Further information on reviewing and ranking will be provided in early 2023.

## Pathway Fora

There will be meetings of all Pathway Representatives at each institution at least twice a year - once in the Autumn, and once again in the Spring. This will be organised by Institutional Academic Leads and Nominated Administrative Contacts. Updates from the central NWSSDTP team will be presented, as well as there being an opportunity for discussion of local institutional matters. Pathway Representatives should attend both of these fora, or arrange for a suitable colleague to attend to represent the pathway.

## Pathway Events

Pathway Representatives and Leads can apply for funding from the NWSSDTP for the organisation of pathway events and training. The NWSSDTP expects each pathway to hold at least one event a year for its students, either solo or jointly with another pathway.

A solo pathway can apply for up to £500 towards an event. The NWSSDTP encourages cross-pathway events, so an event which incorporates two pathways (in the organisation and in attendance at the event) can apply for up to £750, and three or more can claim for £1000. The NWSSDTP also encourages

the involvement of non-HEI Partners in training and events, so any event which incorporates a non-HEI Partner in the delivery can apply for an additional £250 on top of the standard maximum claim amount.

Pathway events (solo or joint) should incorporate students from across the consortium. Pathway events can be opened to students who are not funded by the NWSSDTP, as long as NWSSDTP-funded students are also in attendance. For application paperwork and full details, please see <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/guidance-for-staff/>

## Methods North West

Methods North West provides interdisciplinary and innovative methodological training for researchers across the North West.

Methods North West highlights the depth and breadth of the North West's methodological expertise in the social sciences, bringing together training initiatives from all four of the NWSSDTP partner institutions:

- [engage@liverpool](mailto:engage@liverpool)
- [methods@manchester](mailto:methods@manchester)
- [links@keele](mailto:links@keele)
- [methods@lancaster](mailto:methods@lancaster)

Methods North West runs a series of online and in person methods sessions (aimed primarily at doctoral students) throughout the year. These events are styled and targeted to provide something a little different to the standards methods training. For more information, including booking and joining details, please visit the [Methods North West 'Methods Sessions' webpage](#).

NWSSDTP Students are encouraged to engage with the training available, and are expected to attend the end-of-year Methods North West conference which takes place every year in May/June.

The majority of training opportunities available through Methods North West are open to all PGRs, not only students who are funded through the NWSSDTP.

## Module Exchange

The NWSSDTP supports a Module Exchange scheme, which allows postgraduates from across the four DTP Institutions to access modules at the other institutions. These can be accredited or just auditing. This is open to all PGTs and PGRs within the DTP Institutions, not only NWSSDTP-funded students. The process for module exchange was introduced to facilitate the exchange of training and expertise between institutions.

There is a limit on how many modules master's student may take at partner universities. Master's students must take a minimum of 50% of the taught element at their Home Institution plus their dissertation, unless other arrangements apply (e.g. on a 2+2 programme). All compulsory modules must be taken at the Home Institution.

Where there are limited spaces on a given course, the Partner Institution will reserve the right to offer places to its own students above those requesting a module exchange.

For further information on the module exchange process, including a list of modules, please see: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/current-students/module-exchange/>

## Recognition of New Programmes

The NWSSDTP acknowledges that master's and PhD Programme provision in the four institutions will naturally evolve over the course of the DTP, and that this needs to be recognised and captured.

When changes to master's or doctoral provision occur in any of the pathways, a report should be produced by the relevant institutional Pathway Representative and submitted to NWSSDTP for review, if they wish the course to be considered as eligible for funding from the NWSSDTP. All programmes must align with the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines, which can be found here: <https://esrc.ukri.org/skills-and-careers/doctoral-training/postgraduate-training-guidelines/>

Please send all documentation to the NWSSDTP Manager Hayley Meloy at [hmeloy@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:hmeloy@liverpool.ac.uk). Please note that it may take up to four weeks to review, confirm the programmes and update our website.

It is expected that any reports will be circulated amongst all pathway representatives within the relevant pathway for comment before submission to the NWSSDTP.

### Master's Programmes

A recognition request should be submitted in any of the following cases:

1. Masters programmes that were previously approved which have undergone **substantial** changes (i.e. for which the compulsory modules or research training modules have been changed).

The details provided will be used to assess whether the programme is still eligible as the '1' of a 1+3 studentship and as sufficient research training for a student applying to a +3 studentship. Please detail all changes that have been made to previously approved programmes – detail each module that has been changed, explain the change and why this has enhanced the programme, with reference to the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines. Any changes to additional research training in the programme and/or the dissertation component should also be detailed.

2. New Masters programmes which have been developed since the NWSSDTP bid was submitted, which should be considered as sufficient research training for the 1 of a 1+3 ESRC funded Studentship.

The details provided will then be used to assess whether the programme is eligible as the '1' of a 1+3 studentship and as sufficient research training for a student applying to a +3 studentship. Please give all details of each programme: the name, course structure, compulsory and optional modules and credits. Particular attention should be paid to the research training modules of the programme. Please send the programme specification, and confirm that it has been through any relevant institutional programme approval processes prior to submission of this report. Explain why this course should be deemed eligible for ESRC funding, with explicit reference to the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines.

3. Master's programmes that have been previously approved which have now been discontinued/are no longer deemed eligible due to programme changes.

A list of discontinued programmes will suffice.

If a pathway has several changes to report on, these can all be included in the same report, but should be under clear separate headings.

### **PhD Programmes**

Pathways should also report on new PhD programmes which have been developed since the NWSSDTP bid was submitted, which should be considered as eligible for ESRC funding. The details provided will then be used to assess whether the programme is eligible as a +3 studentship, or the +3 element of a 1+3 studentship. Please give full details of each programme: the name, structure and training requirements. Please send the programme specification, and confirm that it has been through any relevant institutional programme approval processes prior to submission of this report. Explain why this course should be deemed eligible, with explicit reference to the ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines, and detail why the programme first within the ESRC remit.