



Standard Studentship Guidance for October 2024 Entry

Please read this guidance document in full before completing and submitting the Standard Studentship Application Form.

Introduction

This document is intended for those who wish to apply to the Universities of Central Lancashire, 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 October 2024. The guidance below sets out eligibility for awards, expectations of funding and the application process.

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Financial basis of the awards

An NWSSDTP Studentship consists of:

- Payment of academic fees, at the standard UKRI Home rate (£4,712 in 2022/23, exact rate for 2023/24 subject to confirmation from UKRI)
- Maintenance Stipend (£18,622 in 2023/24, exact rate for 2024/25 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 payment of participants.
- Opportunity to apply for additional funding towards:
 - Fieldwork costs (usually only permitted when need for fieldwork is outlined at this initial application stage)
 - Overseas Institutional Visits
 - Internships with non-HEI Partners

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

Students will receive additional Disabled Student Allowance where appropriate.

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 £4,712 in 2023/24 (exact rate for 2024/25 subject to confirmation from UKRI). International tuition fees are usually substantially higher than this sum. The Universities of Keele, Lancaster, Liverpool and Manchester have committed to waiving increased tuition fees for international NWSSDTP students. International students recruited to NWSSDTP Studentship at those institutions will not be expected to pay any additional tuition fees themselves. International candidates applying to UCLan should enquire with their local School PGR Office regarding their policy on international tuition fees for NWSSDTP students.

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 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, they will be classed as an International student.

This will not apply to Irish nationals living in the UK whose right to study and to access benefits and services are preserved on a reciprocal basis under the Common Travel Area arrangement. Such applicants will be classified as Home students.

You must 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/>

Structure of Awards

Candidates may apply for funding towards both a masters programme and a PhD programme, or a PhD programme only. The NWSSDTP does not fund standalone masters programmes. Masters funding will normally only be approved for applicants who do not already have a social science research masters qualification.

It is permissible for current PhD students who have already commenced their PhD to apply for funding for the latter two years (four years part-time) of their programmes, provided they will not have completed more than one year (two years part-time) of their programme by 1st October 2024.

The standard length of a PhD Only studentship is three and a half years full-time (part-time pro rata). This is expected to consist of three years researching and thesis writing, three months training and development, and three months undertaking a Research in Practice placement (see Page 9 below). However, where a candidate may require more than three

months training and development, a longer PhD Only studentship may be approved, of either three years and nine months (including six months training and development) or four years (including nine months training and development). The NWSSDTP reserves the right to suggest that a PhD Only applicant is instead offered a Masters + PhD studentship, if the training and development needs are deemed to require more than nine months support. It is therefore crucial that candidates complete the Development Needs Analysis section of the Application Form as fully as possible (see Page 11 below), as this will be used to conclude the length of funding awarded.

Academic Eligibility

Candidates applying for masters + PhD funding are usually expected to have previously undertaken an undergraduate course, while candidates applying for PhD funding only will usually have undertaken both an undergraduate and a masters course. Typically, candidates will have undertaken these courses at a recognised UK Higher Education Institution (HEI), although applications with qualifications from outside the UK are welcome. It will be necessary to ascertain whether such qualifications equate to a UK honours degree, and at what level. The NWSSDTP bases its assessments of qualifications attained outside the UK on the British Council's NARIC guide. For non-UK qualification transcripts not in English, an official translation 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.

Global Majority Directed Studentships

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 will have the opportunity to identify Global Majority affiliation on the NWSSDTP application form. These applications will be noted on receipt and considered in the process of the standard award competition, in line with the assessment criteria and schedule (see further details above and below).

*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"**.

Priority Areas

The ESRC have allocated the NWSSDTP 9 steered awards per annum in the following Priority Areas:

- Advanced Quantitative Methods (3 awards)
- Data Skills (3 awards)
- Interdisciplinary research which straddles other research council remits (3 awards)

We strongly encourage applicants 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 the Guide to NWSSDTP Priority Areas: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/how-to-apply/priority-areas/>

The Application Process

Students will normally be expected to have been offered a place at one of the five 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, specifically by the 22nd April 2024. 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:

UCLan: <https://www.uclan.ac.uk/postgraduate-research>

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

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

Liverpool: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/how-to-apply/>

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

IMPORTANT Applicants should contact their School PGR Administrators prior to completing and submitting their applications, 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.

You should send a digital copy of the completed NWSSDTP application form with transcripts and references to the relevant School PGR Administrator (details [here](#)) by 5pm on 26st February 2024.

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 the week commencing 22nd April 2024.

b. Outcome of Application

Successful candidates will be informed by email by 1st May 2024. If you are successful in being nominated for an award, you will be asked to confirm by the 22nd May 2024 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 1st May 2024. 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 1st May 2024. 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 1st May 2024, this will mean your application did not progress to the final stage - please contact your relevant School PGR Administrator (contact details [here](#)) for confirmation.

c. Taking up an Award

Award holders will normally be expected to begin their programme of study in September or October 2024 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 PGR 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 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 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 Central Lancashire, Keele, Lancaster, Liverpool or Manchester. Therefore, all requests to make changes to the awards are only considered by the NWSSDTP in exceptional circumstances.

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.

Research in Practice Placements

Please note that all NWSSDTP students will be expected to undertake a 3-month Research in Practice placement in academia, policy, business or a civil society organisation during the course of their studentship. This will give students the practical opportunity to develop their transferrable skills and apply their research skills in different contexts. An additional three months studentship funding is allocated to enable this.

This placement could take the form of a defined project in the form of an internship with a non-HEI Partner. However, the placement could also be an academic Research Assistantship, an Overseas Institutional Visit or another appropriate opportunity. Further details on the range of possible Research in Practice placements will be made available when candidates commence their studentships in October 2024.

Application Timetable

26 th Feb 2024	Deadline for submission to relevant School PGR Administrator (contact details here)
W/C 22 nd April 2024	NWSSDTP Studentship Allocation Committee
By 1 st May 2024	Successful, Reserve and Unsuccessful Candidates informed by email
22 nd May 2024	Deadline for candidates to confirm acceptance of the award
Sep/Oct 2024	New NWSSDTP Cohort start

Guidance Notes for Standard Studentship Application Form

1. Candidate Details

Please complete in full. The NWSSDTP needs to be able to contact you between March and September 2024, so please provide an email address on which you can be contacted throughout this period. Please declare in this section, by ticking the relevant box, if you wish to be considered for the Global Majority Directed Studentships (see Page 4).

2. Registration Details

Please indicate to which University you have applied and which type of studentship you are applying for (see Types of Award on Page 3). Please indicate whether you intend to study full-time or part-time and the name of the specific PhD Programme for which you have applied. Candidates must be planning to study in a recognised NWSSDTP pathway - please see Appendix 1 for a list of pathways, and indicate to which of these you are applying for funding.

3. PhD Project Details

The title of the proposed project should be entered here, and the details of your project should be outlined 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. Please reflect on any ethical issues with might arise from your research.

4. Qualifications

Please enter your relevant academic qualifications.

5. Preparedness for Postgraduate Research

In answering this question, you should include the following information:

- a. **Why** you want to pursue Postgraduate research and why you want to pursue your chosen research topic?
- b. Instances where you have demonstrated **problem-solving skills, initiative, and perseverance in the face of challenges or obstacles**, however big or small, making the most of available resources and opportunities (even when these might have been limited). Where relevant, you can also provide context to academic grades achieved. Challenges or obstacles might relate to various personal circumstances or experiences, including but not limited to, those relating to changing circumstances, ill health, socio-economic background, being the first in your family to attend university, returning to education after a long break, or managing caregiving or other competing responsibilities.
- c. Examples of how you have **completed a project** (or achieved something), **set goals, adapted when necessary, and managed your time effectively**. You can include any

accomplishments (personal, professional, or academic) that you take pride in and explain how you achieved these.

- d. **Your personal development so far**, including any relevant skills you have acquired that have effectively prepared you for undertaking postgraduate research, and the identification of any current skill gaps and how you plan to address these.
- e. Instances where you have successfully **worked collaboratively with others**, possibly providing support to others or seeking support for yourself when needed.
- f. How have any skills developed during experiences discussed above, prepared you for undertaking postgraduate research and for future engagement within the NWSSDTP community?

Examples of how to effectively answer this aspect of the application can be found here:

<https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/how-to-apply/preparedness-for-postgraduate-research/>

6. Supervisory Team

Please state who your prospective supervisors are. This should have been discussed with the prospective supervisors prior to application. List your primary supervisor first. The supervisory fit of your prospective supervision team will be taken into consideration when the application is assessed during the competition. All NWSSDTP students are expected to have at least two academic supervisors.

7. Development Needs Analysis

The ESRC have specific expectations regarding the skills training a candidate should have received by the time they complete their PhD studies. Candidates are asked to reflect fully on their current conceptual, general and specialist skills, and the training they have received to date in these areas. The answers to these questions will **not** be a part of the panels' assessment of your suitability for funding, but they will be used to assess the type and length of studentship you should be awarded if successful (see Page 3), and as such it is crucial to openly reflect on any skills not yet developed or training not yet received, alongside those areas with which you are confident in your existing skillset and training to date.

Conceptual, general and specialist training will predominantly have been delivered during undergraduate and masters programmes but may also be evidenced by professional experience, employment, undergraduate education, and other training undertaken.

The eight key Conceptual Skills to discuss:

1. comprehension of **principles of research design and strategy**, including an understanding of how to formulate research questions which are amenable to empirical investigation and an appreciation of alternative approaches to research
2. understanding of a **broad range of research methods**; quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods including awareness and understanding of AI and machine learning as research tool and the value of using existing surveys and repositories of visual, text data, social media and big data.
3. understanding of appropriate **data generation and use** either through sampling, subject selection or via the use of secondary data from existing sources
4. understanding of **analytical approaches**, including data analysis software
5. understanding of the significance of **alternative epistemological positions** and how epistemological choices impact on findings produced
6. understanding of the application of **good ethical practice** across the entire research process including data ethics which is inclusive of digital approaches
7. understanding of how to conduct and **disseminate research** in a way that is consistent with both professional practice and the standard principles of research ethics
8. understanding **Open Science principles** and practices to enhance reproducibility

The seven key General Skills to discuss:

1. Project management
2. Data management and analysis
3. Ethical and legal issues
4. Digital and bibliographic skills
5. Language skills
6. Skills for engaging with users and for maximising the impact of research
7. Exploitation of research and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

The three key Specialist Skills to discuss:

This includes in-depth subject or disciplinary methodological and theoretical training, and training and support in accessing and using 'cutting edge' data that supports data driven research whether qualitative or quantitative. The level and intensity of the training may differ from subject to subject.

1. Specialist subject/field knowledge

Students should be made aware of the breadth of the field of enquiry, the range of constituent specialisms and the resulting spread of research paradigms and theoretical positions. However, students do not need to demonstrate detailed/depth understanding of all paradigms and approaches, only in-depth knowledge of those area relevant to their work. Students need to demonstrate they are:

- a. well informed of the latest thinking and ideas in their field of enquiry – including subject knowledge, theoretical positions and research methods – from a range of perspective
- b. able to appreciate the basis on which the knowledge in the field has been derived –

- c. able to use this knowledge to make a reasoned defence of the theoretical traditions and research techniques that they ultimately may have chosen (or rejected) during their research.

2. Specialist qualitative skills

Qualitative methods need to be trained to a level that would allow students to understand and interpret a range of phenomenological or textual data. Competency should be developed in the methods *appropriate to the student's specific discipline*. Typically, students specialising in qualitative methods would be expected to be able to:

- a. Use Analytic methods for offline and online textual, aural and visual data
- b. Engage in participatory, multi modal and arts-based research approaches
- c. Use historical, comparative and archival methods
- d. Undertake discourse, content, or narrative analysis
- e. Competency in analysis of qualitative data, using a computer assisted data analysis package, such as NVivo, MAXQDA, or Atlas-ti

3. Specialist quantitative skills

Assuming a basic level of statistical literacy, quantitative research training should develop skill levels by using methods *appropriate to the student's specific discipline*. Typically, those students specialising in quantitative methods would be expected to be able to:

- a. Collate, analyse and interpret complex numerical data that may be presented in tabular or graphical form or other data relevant presentation formats
- b. Understand and undertake inferential statistical tests for parametric and non-parametric data
- c. Understand statistical inference, from cross sectional and longitudinal sample surveys and inference from research using experimental designs
- d. Understand the application of specific statistical approaches to data analysis and links to research design specifics (e.g. ANOVA, correlation, linear/non-linear regression, multivariate modelling, fixed and random effect models, growth trajectory and multi-level modelling)
- e. Apply data reduction and grouping methods, such as factor and cluster analysis, multidimensional scaling and other such data reduction methods linked to research design and data format
- f. Utilise longitudinal analysis, event history analysis, agent-based modeling or similar as appropriate

8. Potential Additional Costs

Please clearly indicate whether you intend to do fieldwork (overseas or within the UK) 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. Please also discuss with your supervisor and indicate whether your project is likely to require 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. Your answers to these questions will not influence the panel's decisions about studentship allocation, but will allow the NWSSDTP to ensure appropriate funding is available to support the project if successful.

9. Priority Areas

Please only complete this section if you consider your PhD project to align with one of the three Priority Areas. Further information about the Priority Areas can be found on Page 5 above and on the website here: <https://nwssdtp.ac.uk/how-to-apply/priority-areas/>

10. Collaboration with a non-HEI Partner

Please only complete this section if your project incorporates a collaborative element with a non-HEI partner organisation. There is no need to complete a separate CASE Studentship Application Form. Before completing this section you must have discussed the collaboration with your supervisor and the proposed partner. Speculative collaborations should not be included here. A letter of support from the partner, which briefly outlines the nature of the collaboration should be included. If no contact has been made with a partner, do not complete this section. Contributions from a collaborating partner can be in cash or in kind.

11. Acknowledgment

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

12. Supporting Documents

You should provide two 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 that are supplied will 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
- Biosocial Research
- 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 Data Science and Artificial Intelligence
- Social Statistics
- Social Studies of Science, Technology and Medicine
- Socio-legal Studies
- Sociology

APPENDIX 2: Guidance Note for Referees

The NWSSDTP application must be supported by two testimonials from people able to comment on your ‘**Preparedness for Postgraduate Research**’.

Potential supervisors can act as referee but should not be used for both references. Where applicants have recently completed an Undergraduate or Masters qualification, it would be expected that academic referees are utilised. Where applicants have been away from Higher Education for some time, references from employers (or similar) can be included. In both cases, referees should be those who can comment on the candidate’s ‘Preparedness for Postgraduate Research’ according to the criteria below:

Preparedness for Postgraduate Research – to what extent does the application demonstrate:	
1. Motivation for Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiasm and a strong motivation for research? • Enthusiasm and a strong motivation for their specific research topic? • A desire to make a positive difference in the world, which they have explicitly linked to their own postgraduate research?
2. Problem Solving, Perseverance and Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance and a problem-solving approach in the face of challenges or setbacks? • Resourcefulness and initiative in terms of making efficient or even creative use of (potentially limited) resources? • The seeking out, identification and utilisation of support and advice available to them?
3. Project and Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ability to set goals, intermediate milestones, and prioritisation of activities? • Capacity to manage their own time effectively, to complete projects or tasks, and to adapt plans if and when necessary? • A commitment to seeing plans through, recognising risks, and building contingencies?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of explicit links between experiences/skills developed in this area and postgraduate research?
4. Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection and awareness of personal abilities, including recognising the transferable nature of skills, their own current boundaries, and where further development is needed? • Seeking and effectively utilising feedback? • Development of a strategy to address additional needs in terms of knowledge, skills, and expertise? • Commitment to continued learning and development? • Awareness of explicit links between experiences/skills developed in this area and postgraduate research?
5. Working with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working with others effectively? Perhaps including existing links to communities, they intend to research? • A commitment to being mindful of their personal actions and their influence on others, while seeking to show respect for individual differences? • Awareness of explicit links between experiences/skills developed in this area and postgraduate research? • An intention to actively engage with opportunities offered by the NWSSDTP, including giving back to the community, should their application be successful?