



## Supplementary Information for Pathways Annual Studentships Competition

This document is a supplement to the **Policies & Procedures Annual Studentship Competition**. It provides additional information and guidance for pathway leads on the following:

1. ESRC Targets and Steered Studentships
2. Action for Equality
3. 4 and 4.5 year Studentships
4. Submission to Interdisciplinary Pathways
5. Managing the Pathway Competition
6. The NINE DTP Open Competition

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### Part 1 / ESRC Targets and Steered Studentships

ESRC has set a target for all DTPs that at least 15 per cent of each cohort should be engaged in some form of non-academic collaboration and that 50 per cent of studentships are allocated on a four (or more) year basis (i.e. 4 or 4.5). Information about these studentships can be found in the **Policies & Procedures Annual Studentship Competition** document.

ESRC has also awarded additional studentships and applied multiple steers to DTPs considered strong in priority areas to ensure that capacity is built in them. NINE DTP is required to allocate a minimum of:

- a) **3 studentships per annum to interdisciplinary research which straddles other research council remits**
- b) **3 studentships per annum research that utilises large and complex data**
- c) **2 studentships per annum to research that utilises advanced quantitative methods**

ESRC has issued the following [guidance to DTPs on steers](#)

#### INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH STUDENTSHIPS

We welcome interdisciplinary studentships as we recognise that many of the most pressing research challenges are interdisciplinary in nature, both within the social sciences, and between the social sciences and other areas of research. The principle aim of this steer is to provide a mechanism by which students can tackle a project that is genuinely interdisciplinary in nature and straddles the social sciences and other research council remits. The proposed research should include substantive interaction between the relevant scientific areas and the studentship should provide training that is not constrained to one scientific approach.

Studentships steered in this **area must be 50 per cent social science and no more than two thirds**. Applications must be genuinely interdisciplinary and inclusive; they should not exclude the approaches of either Council and we would not expect any application to have a share ratio greater than 2:1. These studentships do not have to be co-funded by another Research Council. DTPs will need to:

- Justify how the studentship falls across Research Council remits and how this split meets the share ratio required. Responses should include reference to accredited interdisciplinary pathways where relevant.

- Justify how this training will prepare the student to be able to work effectively across scientific boundaries.
- Describe how the interdisciplinary split supports the research questions to be addressed.
- Demonstrate how the individual training needs of the student are clearly identified and that training is provided across all relevant scientific areas. The arrangements for meeting those training needs should be clearly specified.
- Identify how the DTP will monitor the on-going interdisciplinary training needs of the student to ensure that these continue to be met.

We expect joint supervisory arrangements for these studentships, with one supervisor from the social sciences and one supervisor with a background in the other relevant scientific area. If both supervisors are based in the same department one must have a social science background and the other must have a background in the additional discipline. If either, or both, supervisors consider themselves to be interdisciplinary (i.e. already may have a mix of social and medical science research training and experience) this should be fully explained.

### **DATA SKILLS**

The focus of this steer is developing researchers with the skills to fully exploit the increasing volumes of large and complex data for research purposes. The steer includes survey data and 'big data' (social media, administrative, transactional and geospatial data). Steered studentships can use qualitative and or quantitative approaches and should provide the opportunity for students to develop advanced data skills throughout their studentship.

These forms of data include administrative data, unstructured commercial data (such as loyalty card databases) as well as data created through digital interactions between people, people and organisations, and interactions with urban environments (such as transport footfall data). These various types of data are currently a largely untapped, but information-rich resource; and there is a need to ensure we build capacity to allow students to utilise them more effectively.

### **ADVANCED QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

The aim of this steer is to provide training related to the use of advanced quantitative methods (AQM) in the social sciences. Training for students on an AQM studentship is expected to be at a level over and above the basic generic and subject-specific methods requirements for that discipline.

DTPs will need to:

- Evidence their strength in AQM
- Detail how they will support students to develop the skills needed to use AQM
- Detail how they will assess whether the proposed methods for collecting and/or analysing data are of a level that constitutes advanced quantitative methods within the specified discipline.
- Identify how the DTP will monitor the on-going training needs for AQM studentships to ensure that these continue to be met.

### **NINE DTP procedures**

All steered studentship nominations will be submitted via the Training Pathways, and each pathway can submit an unlimited number of nominations for each steered studentship, above and beyond that pathway's normal quota. Nomination forms should indicate clearly that these are intended as steered applications by choosing the appropriate box on the nomination form, and nominators should also explain why the proposed studentship meets the standards of that particular steer (see guidance above). It is the responsibility of Pathways to ensure that applications submitted to the DTP as steered nominations meet the criteria as outlined above. **Any application not meeting the criteria will be disqualified.**

## Part 2 / Action for Equality

### Encouraging applications from marginalised groups

NINE DTP is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all, and are keen to receive applications from a diverse range of applicants as we strongly believe that diversity across our cohort will lead to a richer doctoral experience and research environment for us all.

To this end, NINE DTP's Action for Equality scheme seeks to encourage departments and supervisors to recruit and support UK-domiciled candidates of Black British and British Asian backgrounds, or mixed Black and Asian heritage individuals, by allowing pathways to submit nominations of candidates from these backgrounds **in addition to** their allocated quota. We are further committed to ensuring we can provide support for these candidates by offering additional information sessions during the competition. We are taking these positive actions in support of the UKRI 'Ethnicity Report' (2021) and the 'Addressing under-representation and active participation' report (October 2021).

In 2021-22 NINE DTP introduced the Action for Equality Scheme. This scheme, which runs alongside the NINE DTP Studentship competition, allows applicants of UK-domiciled Black British, British Asian and mixed heritage Black or Asian to be entered into a separate but parallel studentship competition. The process for the Action for Equality Scheme follows the same assessment criteria and timeline. All applicants for the Action for Equality Scheme will be considered for a NINE DTP studentship. **For commencing in October 2024, we anticipate awarding two full studentships via the Action for Equality Scheme.**

Please note: all submissions, including interdisciplinary, data skills, advanced quantitative methods, collaborative applications, and Action for Equality candidates, will need to be scored and ranked in a single ranking by the pathway. Pathways should only submit students they consider will be competitive in the final studentship panel stage.

## Part 3 / 4 and 4.5 year Studentships

### 4 Year Studentships (PG Cert + PhD)

Students who have some masters training but require additional training in research skills will be granted 4 years funding and will be expected to complete a Postgraduate Certification (PG Cert) as well as their PhD. Students on 4 year studentships will automatically be enrolled into the PG Cert programme. This programme consists of 60 credits and must be completed within the first 2 years of the studentship.

### 4.5 Year Studentships (Masters + PhD)

Students who are yet to commence a Masters degree are eligible for one year of Masters training, prior to the 3.5 year PhD programme. The nomination form for candidates seeking 4.5 year studentships must contain, in box 5.3, a discussion of what the master's level training programme will be and how it is appropriate for their proposed research.

## Part 4 / Submission to Interdisciplinary Training Pathways

### SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

1. Applications can be made to **one** Training Pathway only.
2. Applications to the Thematic (interdisciplinary) Training Pathways must meet the training requirements of that pathway. These are specified in the 3-page Training Pathway statement, which was approved by ESRC as part of

the NINE DTP bid process. These documents will be available on the NINE DTP website. ([www.ninedtp.ac.uk](http://www.ninedtp.ac.uk))

3. The proposed research project must fit the themes of the pathway as described in the Training Pathway statement. It must also ensure that the applicant has met or will meet the training requirements outlined in the

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Pathway statement. This could include having already acquired relevant subject-specific and generic research methods training to Masters level (or equivalent), or applying for an appropriate Masters (specified in the Pathway statement) as part of a 4.5 programme. Where an applicant has previously acquired a disciplinary Masters in Research Methods degree (or equivalent) that qualifies them for a 3.5 studentship, but does not have relevant training appropriate to the Pathway, the expectation is that the applicant will follow an appropriate additional training programme as part of the 4 in that thematic area (e.g. by auditing relevant Masters modules).

4. In assessing applications, supervisor fit and training environment will be very important and interdisciplinary projects with co-supervision across disciplines are likely to be favoured.
5. Each Interdisciplinary Pathway can submit up to a total of 6 applications to the NINE DTP Studentship Competition, plus any steered applications that meet the quality threshold (see below).
6. All Pathways must submit the applications they wish to nominate for consideration for awards electronically to [contact.nine@durham.ac.uk](mailto:contact.nine@durham.ac.uk) by the specified date in Appendix 1 of the NINE DTP Policies & Procedures Annual Studentship Competition document.

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## Part 5 / Managing the Pathway Competition

The aim of NINE DTP is to run a successful **open competition** that meets ESRC steers and requirements for a fair and competitive process, while also encouraging diversity through the Action for Equality scheme. In line with ESRC's expectations and the DTP aims, the open competition will ensure that we recruit **the highest quality social scientists** well prepared to benefit from a world-class research and training experience. NINE DTP run a further competition as part of our Action for Equality scheme, seeking to award two studentships to under-represented groups.

1. In the first stage of the open competition, subject and thematic areas in each institution will have responsibility for initial selection and submission to Training Pathways, and potential supervisors will assist students to prepare a competitive application. Subject areas are expected to **submit only eligible applications** to Pathways (i.e. applications that meet the quality threshold; no applications with incomplete required documentation; no applications from candidates with prior RCUK-funded PhDs). Pathways should submit a maximum of two, or 30% of the full number, nominations for International candidates (as defined by UKRI eligibility guidelines regarding fees, Appendix 1 of the NINE DTP Policies & Procedures Annual Studentship Competition document). Please note: the 30% rule applies to all nominations submitted; this includes nominations submitted above quota owing to alignment to steers or the Action for Equality scheme. The single exception to this is Economics; the ESRC have provided additional flexibility, allowing 50% of nominations to be submitted for non-UK fee paying candidates where the primary discipline is Economics.

Subject areas are expected to **submit applications, including all required documentation, to Pathways as a single pdf file.**

2. Eligible nominations received by the NINE DTP will be reviewed and assessed in two stages, the first of which is:

- **Stage 1 / Pathway-level competition**

3. Throughout the assessment process, all eligible candidates are **assessed and graded against the NINE DTP's Studentship Assessment Scheme**, which is outlined in Appendix 3 of the **NINE DTP Policies & Procedures Annual Studentship Competition** document. All Pathways are strongly encouraged to adopt this scheme when conducting their own internal selection processes.

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## **GUIDANCE ON STAGE 1 / PATHWAY-LEVEL COMPETITION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

1. Subject areas in each institution have nominated academic leads to represent them within the Training Pathways through which they are eligible to apply for DTP studentships. Each Training Pathway has nominated one of these academic leads to act as Training Pathway Director for the next year. Pathway Directors are responsible for:
  - receiving applications from subject areas and distributing these to the Pathway academic leads for review
  - overseeing the open competition review process at Pathway level
  - submitting applications (up to quota, plus AfE and steered applications) from the Pathway to the NINE DTP competition.
2. NINE DTP does not wish to be prescriptive about how Pathways should manage the review of applications, except that Pathways should abide by the following principles:
  - Pathways should use the ESRC scoring scheme (outlined in Appendix 2 of the **Policies & Procedures Annual Studentships Competition 2018/19** document) to rank applications
  - The review process is transparent and fair to all applicants
  - Each application is reviewed and scored by a **minimum of 2 reviewers**
  - Reviewers **should not score applications by candidates they are supervising** (in these cases, an alternative reviewer should be found)
  - The Pathway submits **the best applications** to the DTP competition, irrespective of institution
  - Pathways should submit only applications that are of the **required quality** to be competitive (i.e. usually scoring >76%)
3. Pathways may wish to manage demand by imposing a quota for each departments/school submitting applications. For example, if a pathway has a quota of 5, it would be sensible to limit each department/school to a maximum of 5 applications, plus steers, to the Pathway competition.
4. Pathway Directors will be provided with an Excel spreadsheet which will record the scores from each reviewer for each application and calculate an overall percentage and rank. All candidates should be scored and ranked in a single ranking, including those candidates who are collaborative, or being submitted above quota owing to one of the ESRC steers or our positive action in relation to candidates from Black British or British Asian backgrounds.
5. Pathways may opt for different models of review procedure, which will enable them to respond to the need to assess applications across (sub-)disciplinary differences within Pathways, differences in Pathway size, and number of applications and review loads. Two examples of suggested models are as follows:

### **A) For Pathways involving 3 or more institutions**

- The Pathway academic leads read and score all applications **except those from their own institution**. This means that all applications will receive a minimum of two scores.
- Scores are then aggregated to produce a ranked list
- The Pathway academic leads may then moderate the scores if this is required (allowing them to identify and moderate markers who are consistently high or low, for example)
- The Pathway academic leads agree on a ranked order and the applications that will be submitted to the DTP competition (up to quota, plus any steered applications **of the required standard**)

- The Pathway Director (or nominated administrator) submit the agreed nominations and associated paperwork (full application for each successful applicant at this stage as a pdf file, plus ranked list on Excel spreadsheet) to the DTP competition ([contact.nine@durham.ac.uk](mailto:contact.nine@durham.ac.uk))

### **B) For Pathways involving 2 institutions and/or in which there is a need for wider reviewer expertise**

- Several Pathways involve only 2 institutions (e.g. Anthropology, Environment & Planning, Linguistics). One simple model in these cases is for both academic leads **to read and score all applications** and agree a ranked list (as detailed in bullet points 2-5 under A). Alternatively, where number of applications to pathways is high, or there is a need for gender diversity on the review team, an additional reviewer from each institution may be added.
  - Some Pathways cover divergent subject areas (e.g. Social, Evolutionary and Medical Anthropology; Management, Finance and Economics) in which specialist review may be required to ensure the Pathway selection process is fair and transparent. In these cases, additional reviewers from each institution may be added in order to ensure the review process is free from bias towards one sub-disciplinary area. For example, the Anthropology Pathway has proposed that the review panel is composed of an Evolutionary and Social Anthropologist from each institution and that every application is read and scored by these 4 reviewers.
  - Where disciplinary spread is wide (e.g. Management, Finance and Economics; Sociology, Social Work, Social Policy), there might be merit in ensuring that each application is read by both subject specialists and non-specialists (e.g. the Anthropology model). Candidates who are able convince non-specialists at Pathway level that their application ranks highly are likely to be in a strong position for scrutiny at NINE DTP Competition level.
  - In each of these cases, a ranked list, moderation and submission procedure should be adopted as detailed in bullet points 2-5 under A (above).
6. Wherever possible, Pathways should check that applicants are submitted for the appropriate Studentship (i.e. 4.5, 4 or 3.5).
  7. **Pathway Directors are not involved** in Stage 2 of the Studentship Competition (see below).
  8. Pathways should flag those candidates who are eligible for the Action for Equality Scheme to NINE DTP upon submission, allowing those candidates to be entered into the additional competition. These candidates should be scored and ranked alongside all other candidates in the pathway, and according to the same criteria, and will advance to both the AforE and NINE Studentship panels.

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## **Part 5 / The NINE DTP Open Competition**

### **NINE DTP COMPETITION**

1. Following submission to the NINE DTP, applications are entered into the second stage of the Studentship competition:
  - **Stage 2 / Studentships Committee (NINE DTP Directors and External Reviewers)**

Eligible candidates will further be entered into the Action for Equality competition.

2. As with the Pathway assessment process, all submitted candidates are **assessed and graded against the NINE DTP's Studentship Assessment Scheme**.

## **REVIEW PROCESS AND STUDENTSHIP COMMITTEE**

1. Although it is difficult because of steered applications to predict accurately the demand at this level of the competition, we anticipate in the region of 140-150 applications to the NINE DTP Studentship Competition. We need to balance the appropriate level of oversight with the time constraints on the review process, ensuring that reviewing loads are appropriate to institutional involvement in the DTP. The applications will thus be assessed by a Studentship Committee, using the same ESRC scoring system to produce a ranked list.
2. The Studentship Committee comprises the NINE DTP Directors from each institution (7 in total) plus 4 External Reviewers from institutions outside of NINE DTP. At this stage of the review process, proposals are likely to be read by non-specialists, but we try to ensure that we have full subject coverage among the review team so that at least one reviewer of each proposal is relatively close to the field of research.
3. To ensure an appropriate level of oversight that does not require all Directors to read all applications, the following process will be adopted for conducting the review process:
  - The DTP Directors from Durham and Newcastle will read and score all applications **except those from their own institutions**; the DTP Directors from Queen's Belfast, Northumbria and Ulster will each read and score 50% of applications from Durham and Newcastle.
  - The DTP Directors from Sunderland and Teesside, plus the four External reviewers, will each read and score c.14% of the applications (**and none from their own institutions**)
  - This generates 3 scores for each candidate and allows for normalisation of scores.
4. NINE DTP Studentship Committee members will be provided with an Excel spreadsheet in which to record their scores for each application they read.
5. The DTP Administrator and Manager will be responsible for entering the scores and rankings into a final spreadsheet, which will calculate an overall percentage and rank.
6. The NINE DTP Studentship Committee will convene to moderate the ranked list. The outcome of the open competition will be a ranked list of successful and reserve applicants who will be informed of the decision by the Committee.

## **REVIEW PROCESS AND ACTION FOR EQUALITY STUDENTSHIP COMMITTEE**

1. Candidates eligible for the Action for Equality Scheme will be reviewed by the Action for Equality Studentship panel, applying the NINE DTP scoring criteria to assess the nominations. The panel will be diverse in membership, with panellists also drawn from a broad range of disciplinary interests. The Director of the NINE DTP shall Chair the committee.
2. Panel members will be asked to review all applicants, to ensure a fair and thorough process. Committee members will be provided with a spreadsheet to record their scores, which will be collated by the DTP

Manager.

3. The Action for Equality Studentship Committee will meet in advance of the NINE DTP Studentship Panel, and shall agree to a final score and ranking for all candidates.
4. The outcome of the panel will be announced alongside the outcome of the NINE DTP Studentship Committee as part of a single outcome phase

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#### **Part 5 / Authorisation & Version Control**

<b>Author:</b>	NINE DTP Director Philip Steinberg
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