

# ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships Call specification

## Summary

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is pleased to announce the introduction of a Postdoctoral Fellowship (PDF) scheme 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 PDF call forms part of ESRC's strategy to supporting early career researchers and will be delivered through our national network of Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) and Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) which encompasses 73 research organisations across the UK.

The fellows must be located on an accredited DTP or CDT pathway, and as such will be embedded within a high-quality environment for research and training and will be able to apply for support to undertake a varied programme of activities supporting their continuing development for careers both within and outside of academia.

Proposals should be submitted to the relevant DTP or CDT by **16.00 on 23 March 2018**.

## Call details

The objective of this call is to provide support to those who are within 12 months of completing their PhD, to support them in consolidating their PhD, and preparing them for the next stage of their research careers. For the majority this is likely to be a research career in academia; however, those with a clearly articulated programme of activities to support the transition to a research career outside of academia, can also be considered (eg a researcher in public, private, or civil society organisations).

Fellows' actual programmes should reflect their prior knowledge and experience and be designed to support their longer term research career aspirations. Activities could include, but are not limited to:

- Produce publications in order to help establish track record
- Engage with a range of different audiences to communicate research findings
- Build networks to develop impact opportunities and inform and support further development
- Collaborate with users through an internship or placement to help develop professional and transferrable skills and understanding of users' organisations, provided they are an integral part of the fellowship
- Further training to improve research and related skills
- Developing funding proposals
- Carry out further limited research (up to 25%) related to their PhD

- Teaching, if this is aligned with the wider purposes of the fellowship (up to a maximum of six hours per week);
- Research visits to internationally leading research organisations – either in the UK or abroad – for the purposes of research collaboration, training, and/or access to data or other resources not available at the applicant’s host organisation.

Fellowships are not expected to complete all activities on the above list, and the chosen activities should be tailored to the aims of the fellowship and relevant to support the transition to the fellow’s desired career. Applicants must demonstrate a realistic and practicable programme of work in their proposal, proposals considered to be unrealistic or overambitious are unlikely to be competitive.

Proposals are welcome from both single disciplines and combinations of disciplines but the fellowship activities must be based at least 50% within the social sciences.

We particularly encourage proposals that involve the use of advanced quantitative methods (AQM) or data analysis.

### **Duration of fellowships**

The grants provide funding for **up to one year full-time, or up to two years part-time** to give fellows time to prepare for a successful career in research either within or beyond academia. In exceptional cases, applicants can apply for a fellowship for up to 18 months; however, this must be fully justified by the programme of activities being proposed. Part-time grants are for applicants whose normal working hours are part-time and not for applicants who wish to hold the fellowship and continue other employment. Fellows must spend 100% of their working time (whether full-time or part-time) on the fellowship and cannot take any secondary paid employment during the course of the grant.

A limited amount of teaching will contribute to the professional development of the fellow and therefore grant holders can set aside up to six hours per week (pro rata) to other duties during the fellowship, including training and preparation time.

### **Eligibility**

This opportunity is open to applicants who have completed their PhD at a research organisation (RO) that is part of a [DTP](#) or [CDT](#) and must be held at an RO that is part of a [DTP](#) or [CDT](#) eligible to participate in this initiative and aligned to an accredited pathway: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/postdoctoral-fellowships/>

Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of the RO at which they are applying. Applicants who are not established members must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the fellowship. Further details about eligibility of applicants can be found in the Research Funding Guide ([www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg)). The call is **not open** to applicants who are established, permanent members of staff in an academic position with a research component.

Applicants do not have to have had an ESRC-funded studentship in order to be eligible to apply.

At the time of submitting a proposal, the applicant must either:

- have been awarded a PhD; or
- have submitted their thesis and passed their viva voce (or passed subject to minor corrections), with the expectation that the PhD will be awarded by the fellowship start date<sup>1</sup>.

The grants are restricted to those with **no more than 12 months** of active postdoctoral experience. Active postdoctoral experience is defined as that accomplished between the viva voce being passed and the closing date of the competition. This includes professional doctorates as well as the PhD. In calculating 'active' experience we will make allowance for career breaks, where the applicant has interrupted their career for family, health or other personal reasons.

This call welcomes proposals from those returning to research following a career break. Applicants are however required to meet the eligibility criteria of no more than 12 months of active postdoctoral experience.

### **Funding including costs and staffing**

The total cost for each fellowship can include the following:

- Fellow's salary costs
- Indirect costs
- Estate costs
- Up to £10,000 of other costs (to include costs such as mentoring costs, travel and subsistence, conference attendance, training, and fieldwork, for example).

No other costs are permitted. Each proposal will need to show these figures as 100% of full Economic Cost (fEC) and the ESRC will meet 80% fEC on the proposals submitted. All proposals will be subject to ESRC's funding rules as outlined in our Research Funding Guide (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>).

### **Mentoring arrangements**

All Fellows are required to have a mentor based at the research organisation where the fellowship is held. The mentor should have experience and a strong interest in the applicant's field of research but should not normally be the applicant's PhD supervisor. We recognise that this may not always be possible, so in exceptional circumstances the PhD supervisor may be the mentor, however this choice should be fully justified if this is the case. The mentor should have the skills and experience relevant to the aims of the fellowship.

Whilst the mentor should be able to assist the fellow in achieving the goals and activities of the fellowship, it will be important for the applicant to demonstrate how they are actively managing their own career development.

---

<sup>1</sup> We expect that applicants would be able to address the minor corrections within three months of submitting their fellowship proposal so that the award would be confirmed by 1 October 2018. Fellowship start dates cannot be deferred beyond 1 October 2018 if the award has not been confirmed by then.

We expect the mentoring time required to be around one or two hours per week, and funding will be provided through the fellowship to enable this (under the 'other costs' heading).

A secondary mentor is permitted, particularly in interdisciplinary areas or where the fellow will be spending time at an overseas institution. The secondary mentor could be the PhD supervisor or someone else from where they completed their PhD if they are moving institutions.

## **Stakeholder engagement and impact expectations**

We expect fellows funded under the call to have identified the potential impacts of their research on policy and practice, and to actively consider how these can be maximised and developed. This emphasis on research impact will be reflected within the assessment process and will be taken into account during the review process. We recommend that 10% of the overall budget should be allocated for impact-related activities.

When completing the 'Impact plan and user engagement' section of the proposal, applicants may find it helpful to refer to [ESRC guidance on developing an impact strategy](#).

## **How to apply**

All applicants must submit proposals on the provided submission form along with required attachments by **16.00 on 23 March 2018** to the DTP or CDT they are applying to (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/postdoctoral-fellowships/>).

Each DTP/CDT will peer review the proposals and make funding decisions on behalf of ESRC. Successful applicants will be required to submit their proposal through the Research Council's Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>).

## **Assessment criteria**

Proposals will be assessed on the following criteria:

- 1. Quality of work programme**  
*Is the workload clearly defined and specified objectives achievable and realistic within the time allocated?*  
*Are the proposed activities clearly justified in terms of supporting their longer term career aspirations?*
- 2. Value for money**  
*Are costs clearly and adequately justified?*
- 3. Impact and outputs**  
*Is the planned output during the fellowship appropriate and attainable? Are there adequate plans to share the results and engage with academic and non-academic audiences?*
- 4. Consideration of ethical issues**  
*Does the proposal show sufficient awareness of any ethical issues that may be raised by the proposed fellowship, and how might these be addressed?*

## **Mandatory attachments**

In addition to an application pro forma, the following seven attachments are mandatory and must be included with your proposal in a minimum of font size 11:

### **I. Case for support (maximum six sides of A4)**

This should be structured to include the following headings:

- **Abstract/ summary of progress**  
Applicants should provide either a summary or abstract of their in-progress or completed thesis. This should be no more than one page and should include its main claims to originality and excellence, methodology used and significant findings.
- **Impacts of your research**  
This section should describe the impacts your research has had or that you expect it to have. Impacts include the impact of completed research and any planned further limited research, the dissemination of its results and the building up of a publication track record, the development of the research field and the behaviour or understanding of users and policy-makers. We are also interested in the impact the applicant's training to date has had on their skills development and on their prospects for a successful academic career.
- **Research-related achievements**  
This section requires a well-structured summary of 'where you are now' in your training and personal development. This will help reviewers decide whether an applicant is at a stage in their career development where a fellowship will have an important and lasting impact on their ability to work as a professional researcher.
- **Planned programme of activities**  
This section should detail your planned programme of activities and the key milestones for these activities. Please note that the programme of activities should be tailored to support your longer term career aspirations, whether you are aiming for a career in academia or a research career in the broader economy.

Fellows are not expected to undertake major new research during a grant. However, limited additional research directly linked to the PhD can be undertaken. The Fellowship does not have to be directly building on the work of the PhD; however, it does need to follow on or be related to it.

The programme of activities should provide the fellows with time to maximise the impact of their PhD, which could include communicating the research findings arising from their doctoral work, building international networks to develop impact and further research, collaborating with users, learning the skills of writing for publication, and further improving their research and related skills.

We recognise that during the grant period a limited amount of teaching could be beneficial to the professional development of the fellows. Grant holders will therefore be permitted to put aside a maximum of six hours per week (pro rata) to teaching including preparation time.

## **2. Justification of resources (maximum two sides of A4)**

This statement should be used to break down and justify the resources required to undertake the research project.

- Explain why the indicated resources are needed, taking account of the nature and complexity of the programme of work being proposed. Note that it is not sufficient merely to list what is required.
- Estates and indirect costs do not need to be justified.
- Break down resources into the following directly incurred fund headings:
  - Staff (salary costs of fellow)
  - Travel and subsistence
  - Other costs (to include mentoring costs, conference attendance, training, fieldwork, impact-related costs, networking)
- Travel and subsistence and other costs under the directly incurred fund heading must not exceed £10,000.

## **3. CV (maximum two sides of A4)**

The CV needs to provide the date the PhD viva voce was passed, or the scheduled date for the viva voce, brief details of education to date, any awards received for work or training, previous employment history, and any conference papers or publications.

## **4. List of publications**

The list of publications should contain the bibliography for references cited in the proposal. The applicant's own publications should be included with their CV.

## **5. Head of department statement (maximum one side of A4)**

The head of department at the host RO must complete a statement confirming the RO's support for the proposal. Host ROs must demonstrate their strong support for the proposal guaranteeing as a minimum that the named mentor will be available and that appropriate support facilities, including office space and appropriate computing facilities, will be made available to the fellow during the period of the grant. In addition, the host RO will be expected to show they have a commitment to the support and promotion of early career researchers and lecturers.

The head of department statement should:

- confirm that the applicant will be accepted into the department as a member of staff for the purpose of undertaking the proposed programme of work
- explain how the proposed programme of work will fit in with the department's wider research programme
- confirm that the applicant will have access to the same training and development opportunities open to permanent members of academic staff at the institution
- confirm that the applicant's work and progress will be subject to the same monitoring and appraisal as those of other academic staff within the host RO.

## **6. Mentor statement and summary CV (maximum two sides of A4)**

A combined mentor statement and CV must be included as an attachment to the proposal. Where there is more than one mentor, the statement should be completed by the primary mentor but must detail the contribution to be made by all mentors. Brief CVs of not more than one side of A4 should be included for each of the other mentors.

Fellows will be required to have a mentor throughout the period of the grant and they should be identified at the time of applying. The mentor should ideally have research experience in the same field as the applicant but should not, wherever possible, be the PhD supervisor. The mentor will need to be a senior colleague within the host RO. The reviewers will emphasise the role of the mentor seriously and will look for strong evidence of support. Thus the mentor statement should demonstrate that the mentor:

- has considered the individual applicant's needs carefully and tailored their programme of support to their individual needs
- will ensure the fellow is kept properly active and focussed throughout the year
- will also keep the fellow's long-term career prospects clearly in mind.

## **7. Referee statement (maximum one side of A4)**

The applicant must provide one referee statement to contribute to the assessment process. The referee may be the PhD supervisor, however if the supervisor is the proposed mentor, the referee statement should be from a second academic.

## **8. Other attachments**

If you are intending to visit an overseas institution within the period of the fellowship, a letter of support from the institution must be provided, supporting the visit in principle.

No other additional attachments will be accepted, and your proposal may be returned or rejected if you include attachments that are not permitted under this call or if any of the mandatory attachments are missing.

## **Commissioning timetable**

- Call announced – 31 October 2017
- Closing date for proposals – 23 March 2018
- Decisions confirmed to applicants – 29 June 2018
- Successful proposals submitted in Je-S – by 27 July 2018
- Fellowships commence – from 1 October 2018

## **Contacts**

For queries related to the call, please contact the DTP or CDT you are applying to.