

Policies & Procedures

Annual Studentships Competition

The Northern Ireland and North East (NINE) Doctoral Training Partnership is an ESRC-funded consortium of seven universities delivering postgraduate social science training in Northern Ireland and the North East of England. It comprises of Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Teesside University, University of Sunderland, Queen’s University Belfast and Ulster University.

All awards will be subject to the rules of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Key policy documents from these two organisations can be found in the [Reference Documents](https://www.ninedtp.ac.uk/reference-documents/) section of the NINE DTP website.

# Part 1 / Policy

## 1. ALLOCATION PRINCIPLES

NINE DTP runs a combined annual studentship competition to recruit and select postgraduate students of the very highest calibre to study at Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Teesside, Sunderland, Queen’s, or Ulster universities. NINE DTP operates an open competition for the awarding of studentships, which is centred on the quality of candidates and their proposed research, alongside a linked Action for Equality initiative to award two full scholarships to specific under-represented groups.

NINE DTP’s studentship competition has been designed to be as open and transparent as possible, with academic staff from across accredited pathways actively encouraged to engage and support the process in a variety of capacities. Furthermore, in support of NINE DTP’s emphasis on quality and transparency, all decisions around which students are funded are based on clear and agreed assessment criteria (see Appendix 3).

## 2. AVAILABLE AWARDS

NINE DTP awards around 50-55 fully-funded postgraduate studentships per year, across 18 disciplinary and interdisciplinary pathways. Eight of these awards are ringfenced for projects crossing the remits of research councils or using advanced quantitative measures or large and complex data sets, and at least 15 percent of the total (7 or 8, depending on the total number of awards made) must be collaborative with a non-academic partner. No more than 30 percent of awards (ca 15 or 16) may be made to international students.

NINE DTP also awards two fully-funded postgraduate studentships via our Action for Equality scheme. These awards may be awarded to candidates of any pathway, for any award type available, and for any institution within the partnership. The process for the Action for Equality Scheme is embedded within the standard NINE Studentship competition and follows the same assessment criteria and timeline.

## 3. TYPES OF AWARDS AVAILABLE

A range of studentships award-types are available:

* 1. **3.5 Year Studentships** for students who have already completed, or will have completed by the commencement of their PhD, a Master’s that included 60 credits or more of core research methods training.
  2. **4 Year Studentships** for students who have completed, or will have completed by the commencement of their PhD, a Master’s in a relevant discipline, but who have not completed or will not successfully complete 60 credits or more of core research methods training. Students selected for these awards will also be registered on and required to complete a 60-credit Research Training Certificate during their first two years of study, and they receive an additional six (6) months funding in support of this.
  3. **4.5 Year (1+3.5) Studentships** for students who are yet to commence a Master’s degree. This programme of study includes one year for obtaining a Master’s degree that includes training in a broad suite of research methods, as outlined in the ESRC’s Learning Objectives. In most instances, students fulfil this requirement by completing an established Master’s in Research Methods course, either at the institution at which they will be obtaining their PhD or at another NINE DTP institution. Students who choose to fulfil this training by enrolling in a more disciplinary-focused master’s will likely be required to complete additional modules to obtain the breadth and quantity of methods training required by the ESRC. Students who propose this route should detail precisely how their master’s training will be obtained (in Question 5.3 of the Nomination Form) and they should also be aware that NINE DTP does not have resources to fund additional modules if extra fees are required.
  4. **5 Year and 5.5 Year Studentships** are equivalent to the 4 and 4.5 year studentship awards, respectively, but are for students who additionally need to undertake a language-training Master’s. These award-types are available only to students funded to undertake research on the Language-Based Areas Studies (LBAS) pathway.

Each of the award packages incorporates time for an integrated 3-month placement as well as doctoral (and, where applicable, pre-doctoral) studies. Students who fail to undertake a three-month placement will have their funding award reduced by three months.

NINE DTP reserves the right to adjust the award type for any nomination where it believes that the incorrect award type has been selected on the nomination form. Although nominations for different award types are assessed with different weightings (see Appendix 3), selection of a specific award type does not generally make a nomination more or less competitive.

For all award packages, the thesis submission deadline is the same as that for the end of funding. Candidates who do not submit by this deadline may incur continuation fees, depending on the policies of their home university. Conversely, students who submit in advance of this deadline may forfeit funding support for any time remaining in their funding package after thesis submission.

Individuals presently enrolled as PhD students are permitted to apply for NINE DTP funding only if a) they do not presently have full finding (tuition plus stipend at or above the UKRI level) in place for the duration of their studies and b) they are in their first year of PhD study (i.e. they will have completed no more than 12 months of full-time study, or 24-months part-time, by the 1 October start date).

Part-time equivalents to the above studentships are available across all accredited pathways, with the respective time of funding being doubled (e.g. 7 years part-time funding for a student not requiring any master’s study). Should a part-time candidate be successful the NINE DTP will consult with the successful candidate and pathway lead at their host institution to ensure the appropriate arrangements are in place to support their studies and that they comply with the ESRC’s employment requirements regarding part-time award-holders.

## 4. PATHWAYS

## NINE DTP manages 18 accredited pathways, each of which brings together expertise in specifically designated schools or departments at some of our partner institutions. Students can apply to only one pathway, and their enrolment (and primary supervisor) must be in a department/school that is aligned with that pathway (see table below):

*/ Policies & Procedures / Annual Studentship Competition*

## ACCREDITED PATHWAYS

Studentships can be held in the following accredited Pathways within the ESRC disciplinary remit:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pathway** | **Durham** | **Newcastle** | **Queen’s** | **Ulster** | **Northumbria** | **Teesside** | **Sunderland** |
| **Anthropology** | Department of Anthropology |  | School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy  and Politics |  |  |  |  |
| **Criminology, Prisons & Policing** | Department of Sociology |  | School of Social Sciences,  Education and Social Work | School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies.  School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy | Department of Social Sciences | School of Social Sciences,  Humanities and Law | School of Social Sciences |
| **Economic & Social History** | Department of History | Newcastle University Business School | Queen’s Business School |  | History |  |  |
| **Education** | School of Education | School of Education, Communication and  Language Science | School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work | School of Education |  |  |  |
| **Environmental Planning** |  | School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape  Centre for Rural Economy | School of the Natural Built Environment |  | Architecture and  Built Environment |  |  |
| **Human Geography** | Department of Geography | School of Geography, Politics & Sociology | School of the Natural Built Environment |  | Geography & Environmental Sciences |  |  |
| **Language Based Area Studies** | School of Government and International Affairs | School of Modern Languages |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Law** | Durham Law School | Newcastle University Law School | School of Law | School of Law | Law |  |  |
| **Linguistics** |  | School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences.  School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics.  School of Modern Languages | School of Arts, English and Languages |  |  |  |  |
| **Management, Business and**  **Economics** | Durham  University Business School | Newcastle  University Business School | Queen’s Business School | Ulster University Business School | Newcastle Business School |  |  |
| **Politics & International Studies** | School of Government & International Affairs | School of Geography, Politics and Sociology | School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics |  |  |  |  |
| **Psychology** | Department of Psychology | School of Psychology | School of Psychology | School of Psychology | Psychology | School of Social Sciences,  Humanities and Law |  |
| **Sociology, Social Policy, and Social Work** | Department of Sociology | School of Geography, Politics and Sociology  Public Health Science Institute | School of Social Sciences,  Education and Social Work | School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies.  School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy | Social Sciences  Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing | School of Social Sciences,  Humanities and Law | School of Social Sciences |
| **Sport & Society** | Sport and Exercise Sciences |  |  |  | Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation |  |  |

**Interdisciplinary Pathways**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathway** | **Durham** | **Newcastle** | **Queen’s** | | **Ulster** | | **Northumbria** | **Teesside** | **Sunderland** | |
|  | **Children, Youth & Families** | Department of Sociology  School of Education  Department of Geography | School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences.  School of Geography, Politics & Sociology  School of Law  Population Health Sciences Institute | | School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work | |  |  | School of Social Sciences,  Humanities and Law | |  |
|  | **Conflict, Security & Justice** | School of Government & International Affairs  Department of Geography Durham Law School | School of Geography, Politics & Sociology  Newcastle University Law School | |  | | School of Criminology, politics, and social Policy | Psychology |  | |  |
|  | **Environment, Climate & Sustainability** | Department of Geography  Department of Anthropology  Durham Law School  Modern Languages and Linguistics  Durham University Business School | School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape  Centre for Rural Economy  School of Geography, Politics & Sociology  School of Modern Languages  Newcastle University Law School | | School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics | |  | Geography & Environmental Sciences | School of Social Sciences,  Humanities and Law | |  |
|  | **Health, Well-being & Society** | Department of Anthropology  Department of Sociology Department of Geography | School of Geography,  Politics & Sociology  Population Health Sciences Institute  School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape  Centre for Rural Economy | | School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work | | School of Sociology and  Applied Social Studies | Nursing Midwifery and  Health |  | |  |

## 5. STEERED AWARDS

The ESRC mandates that a minimum number of the awards made by NINE DTP each year meet certain criteria, which are collectively known as ‘steers’

* 3 studentships per year must fund training for research that has **cross-council** subject matter;
* 3 studentships per year must fund training for research that utilises **large and complex data**;
* 2 studentships per year must fund training for research that utilises **advanced quantitative methods**;
* 15 percent of studentships per year (typically a minimum of 7 or 8, depending on the total number of awards made) must fund training for research that is undertaken as part of a **non-academic collaboration**.

There are places on the nomination form to justify how a proposed studentship meets a steer(s). Because NINE DTP must meet the minimum numbers for these steers, nominations that qualify for one or more steer may have a better chance of being successful. To facilitate the DTP’s efforts at recruiting the best students for each steer, each pathway is allowed to submit steered nominations to the general competition over and above its normal nomination quota. However, note that in the case of the collaborative steer, because collaboration is assessed as a separate element, a weak case for collaboration may actually hurt a nomination that could have been stronger if it were not proposed as a collaborative studentship. Also, note that the majority of studentships awarded fall outside of any steer, so one should not be reluctant to submit a nomination just because it does not fall within a steer.

Further details on each of the four steers follows:

## 5a. The Cross-Council Steer

The principle aim of this steer is to fund studentships where the proposed project is genuinely interdisciplinary in nature and straddles the social sciences and the remits of at least one research council other than the ESRC (e.g. NERC, EPSRC, MRC, AHRC). 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 at least 50 per cent social science, however they should be at least one-third within the remit of another research council.** Applications must be genuinely interdisciplinary and inclusive; they should not exclude the approaches of either council. These studentships do not have to be co‐funded by another research council. Nominations for studentships meeting the cross-council steer should:

* Justify how the studentship falls across research council remits and how this split meets the share ratio required (between 50% and 67% social sciences). Accredited interdisciplinary pathways should be referenced 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 will cross scientific boundaries and how they will be met across the range of relevant disciplines.

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. An example might be a project on environmental economics, submitted through the NINE Management, Business and Economics pathway, but with an additional supervisor from an Earth Sciences department that is part of a Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) training pathway. 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. if they already have a mix of social and medical science research training and experience) this should be fully explained.

**5b. The Large and Complex Data Steer**

The aim of this steer is to develop researchers with the skills to fully exploit the increasing volumes of large and complex data for research purposes. Examples of ‘Large and complex data’ include survey data, ‘big data’ (social media, administrative, transactional and geospatial data), administrative data, unstructured commercial data (such as loyalty card databases), data depicting levels and types of interactions in particular environments (such as transport footfall data). It is likely to encompass digital interactions between people, or between people and organisations. Research funded under this steer may involve qualitative or quantitative methods of analysis.

**5c. The Advanced Quantitative Methods Steer**

The aim of this steer is to fund students who will be trained in the use of advanced quantitative methods in the social sciences, and who will use that training in their PhD research. ‘Advanced quantitative methods’ are defined as those that are at a level over and above the basic generic and subject-specific methods requirements for the student’s discipline.

**5d. Non-Academic Collaboration Steer (Collaborative Awards)**

Collaborative awards are made to doctoral research projects that directly involve and engage with non-academic partner organisations outside of the university sector, including businesses, industry, government departments and agencies, charities, the NHS, local authorities and think-tanks. Research conducted under a collaborative studentship makesa distinct contribution to both the student and the partner organisation, generating both intellectual and practical benefits/outcomes. Collaborating partners can be national, regional, or local organisations and based in any geographic location. The collaborator may provide some or all of the following forms of support to the student:

* Substantive and sustained project supervision and support;
* Placement and work shadowing opportunities;
* Specific training and development provision;
* Access to research facilities and equipment; and
* Office space and other resources.

The ESRC does not require collaborative partners to make a direct financial contribution towards collaborative studentships; however, such contributions are encouraged as they demonstrate the partner’s commitment to the collaboration. Partners may wish to consider providing dedicated financial support towards the costs of the award-holder’s research, such as travel, specialist equipment and other related expenses. NINE DTP encourages collaborative studentship nominations that involve financial contributionsthat can part-fund a studentship, such as meeting up to 50% of the total costs of the award. Collaborative partners may also provide the difference between Home and International tuition fee rates if and where appropriate. However, the core criteria upon which a collaboration will be reviewed will be in relation to the quality of the collaboration (e.g. opportunities for knowledge exchange, data sharing, access to networks, expert advice, project support and the mutual benefits of the working relationship) as well as the factors against which all studentship nominations are assessed (the proposed research project, training programme, and research environment), and not any financial considerations.

All collaborative studentships are underpinned by a formal written agreement with the collaborative partner regarding access, intellectual property and any financial contributions.

## 6. POSITIVE ACTION IN RELATION TO UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS (ACTION FOR EQUALITY COMPETITION)

NINE DTP is committed to taking positive action for members of groups that have historically been under-represented in PhD training. To this end, as part of NINE DTP’s Action for Equality (AfE) programme, pathways are invited to submit an unlimited number of candidates of UK-domiciled Black British, British Asian and mixed heritage Black or Asian backgrounds to the AfE competition, which will award two studentships. AfE candidates who are unsuccessful in the AfE competition are then entered into the general competition, where they will have a second chance at being selected for an award.

Candidates who are UK domiciled (i.e. qualifying for home fees) and identify as being of Black British, British Asian, or mixed heritage Black or Asian backgrounds should indicate their eligibility for the AfE competition by ticking the appropriate box on the nomination form. Further information on the AfE scheme, as well as additional resources for nominees and awardees from Black British, Black Asian, or mixed backgrounds can be found on the NINE DTP website’s [Action for Equality](https://www.ninedtp.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AforE-studentship-scheme-2023.pdf) page.

## 7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

NINE DTP’s studentships provide successful applicants with the following core financial support, for the duration of their award:

* Payment of **tuition fees** for home candidates, and a contribution of the UKRI tuition fee rate to all international students (set at £4,786 in 2024-25) (international applicants should consult the ‘Eligibility’ section below for more about funding for tuition support for international students);
* A **tax-free annual maintenance grant** at the RCUK’s national rate (set at £19,237 in 2024-25).

Additionally, applicants may apply for contributions towards funding for **overseas fieldwork and difficult language training**. Although applications to access these funds are not made until the student has commenced studies, **the need for these supplementary allowances *must* be noted on their initial nomination form, including through incorporation of the need for overseas field work and/or difficult language training into the candidate’s research proposal (e.g. in their planned methodology and fieldwork plans).** All overseas fieldwork costs must be used in accordance with the ESRC guidelines, and the DTP cannot fund or permit fieldwork to any area in which the FCDO advise against travel. Pathways, departments and supervisors should investigate and consider the feasibility of travel to the suggested location in advance of nominating a candidate for a studentship. Please further note that funds for overseas fieldwork are limited. Award-holders may apply for funds from the DTP for up to £7,500 to support overseas fieldwork; should the fieldwork cost more than £7,500 the candidate will need to find additional sources of funding to cover costs. We therefore encourage supervisors and candidates to work to ensure any projected fieldwork plans are economically feasible.

Further support is available as well to assist students with meeting the extra costs of an **Overseas Institutional Visit** (up to £4,000 for a visit lasting up to 13 weeks) or a **Placement** (up to £1,500 for a placement lasting up to 3 months). Students also have access to the DTP’s **Research Training and Support Grant** (up to £3000 to support individual research and training needs like UK-based fieldwork, conference attendance, or enrolment in a training course not offered by the DTP or one of its institutions) as well as the **Cohort Development Fund** (for group trainings like DTP-organised summer schools and student-initiated workshops for groups of DTP students). Unlike the Overseas Fieldwork and Difficult Language Training funds, intentions to access Overseas Institutional Visit, Placement, Research Training and Support Grant, or Cohort Development funds do not need to be highlighted in a candidate’s research proposal.

All maintenance grants are paid to award-holders in advance on either a quarterly or monthly basis by their host institution’s relevant Finance Office.

## 8. COMMENCEMENT OF AWARDS

All awards made by NINE DTP during this studentship competition will **commence at the start of the 2025-26 academic year (October 2025)**, unless there are exceptional circumstances affecting a successful candidate, which should be raised with NINE DTP following the issuing of the candidate’s official award notification.

**Studentships cannot normally be deferred**,or started before 01 October 2025.

## 9. ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

NINE DTP’s studentships are available to both Home and International students.

Guidelines for determining whether one would be a Home or International student can be found in Appendix 1. Final decisions on whether one is eligible to qualify as a Home student will be made by the relevant office at the university where the student will be enrolled.

In any cohort (typically consisting of 50-55 students), no more than 30 percent (i.e. 15 or 16 students) may be classified as International. The only provision for exceeding this limit is when more then 30 percent of Economics students are International, as this number – for Economics students only – can go up to 50 percent.

For International students, the difference between the Home tuition rate (which is covered for all students whether Home or International) and the International student rate must be covered by the department / institution / other funding sources (e.g. a collaborating partner). NINE DTP cannot provide funds to cover this difference. Historically, International students who have received NINE DTP funding and who fall within the 30% cap have had the fee difference covered by the university at which they enrol, so International applicants should not refrain from applying because of NINE DTP’s inability to directly cover International fees.

Candidates awarded part-time studentships are required to commit at least 50% of their standard working week to their postgraduate studies and are not permitted to hold employment for more than 50% of the time whilst studying. NINE DTP will liaise closely with all part-time award-holders to ensure their package of support is most appropriate to their needs and individual circumstances.

Candidates who hold a doctoral degree, hold an award from or are financially supported by another organisation that will fund them at or above the UKRI level for the duration of their studies, or who will have undertaken more than one year full-time PhD study or part-time equivalent by the 1 October start date will not be eligible for an award.

## 10. JOINT SUPERVISION

NINE DTP encourages students to have supervisors from across more than one NINE DTP institution, to fill possible gaps in supervisory expertise and to build inter-university research collaborations. However, supervision across partner institutions is not required. When supervision does occur across institutions, the student must have one host institution where they are registered and where tuition fees are charged. (NINE DTP encourages institutions to use workload credits to compensate supervisors who serve on the committees of students enrolled at other partner institutions.) In cases where the hosting institution (or hosting department) requires two supervisors at that institution, the supervisors from this institution should be listed as the first and second supervisors and the one from an external institution should be listed as third supervisor. In cases where the hosting institution has no such requirement, the external supervisor could either be a third supervisor or they could be the second supervisor.

# Part 2 / Nomination/Application Process

## 11. APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

The core of the NINE DTP studentship application process is the nomination from, which the prospective supervisor submits (along with attachments, which are collected by the student), initially to the PGR administrator at the department where the student seeks to enrol.

Prior to submitting the nomination form, however, the student must:

* Complete the relevant institution’s online postgraduate application form, which will typically include uploading associated documents such as letters of reference, transcripts, etc.; and
* Complete a [**NINE DTP Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form**](https://durhamuniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6mQTTxKKzXCj4y2) online.

Students are required to enter reference numbers from the university application number and from the NINE DTP Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form onto their nomination forms, so these steps must be completed by the student before submission of the nomination form.

**12. THE NOMINATION FORM (AND ATTACHMENTS)**

The nomination form consists of several parts, including the research proposal, which is written directly on to the nomination form. The research proposal must not be longer than 2,000 words in length (including footnotes, but excluding bibliography / reference list). **If a proposal exceeds this maximum length of 2,000 words it will not be considered.** Studentships funded by NINE DTP are student-led. Although consultation with the prospective supervisor (and collaborator, if they are applying for a collaborative studentship) is strongly encouraged, students are expected to develop their own research proposals to fit their interests and training needs. Although the student takes the lead in writing the research proposal component of the nomination form, typically the supervisor is heavily involved in drafting the other components.

By Monday 20th January 2025, the student (or their supervisor) must submit the following to the PGR administrator of the department where the student seeks to enrol (and where the primary supervisor is based):

* NINE DTP Nomination Form (including reference numbers from the university application and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, and including the research proposal which is embedded within the form)
* Current CV (maximum 2 pages)
* Two letters of reference (candidates should avoid nominating referees who are named as their potential supervisors in their application; however, if this is not possible a justification of their use as a referee should be provided within the body of the reference)
* Full transcripts of previous qualifications/degrees obtained to date
* A signed copy of the NINE DTP Candidate Agreement
* Personal statement elaborating on aspects of the candidate’s background and suitability for the proposed studentship, beyond what is evident on the CV

Once nominations have been gathered by the participating departments in the pathway, departments engage in internal review of nominations, with feedback provided to applicants and their prospective supervisors. Additionally, any missing elements from the nomination package may be inserted during this period. The final version of the entire nomination package must be received by the department PGR administrator by Monday 10th February 2025; after this date no edits are permitted.

The PGR administrator then collates each package, combining all of the elements noted above with a copy of the student’s university application, and sends them on to the pathway director. The pathway director chairs the pathway competition, in which the leads of that pathway review all nominations and select which ones to forward on to the overall studentship competition, in ranked order. More information on the pathway competition can be found in the ‘Supplementary Pathway Information’ document available on the NINE DTP website.

## The studentship competition should be completed by 1st April 2025 with announcements being made in the weeks that follow, although the final list of incoming students typically is not finalised until July, due to late offers being made to students on the reserve list. More information on the decision-making timeline can be found in Appendix Two.

## 13. ASSESSING NOMINATIONS

## The criteria for assessing nominations is detailed in Appendix Three. The same criteria and scoring systems are used at both stages (the pathway stage and the studentship stage). Assessment will be made based on the criteria and weighting associated with the award type for which the student has applied (although, subsequent to student selection, the award-type may be adjusted to fit the student’s training experience and needs.

## Assessment at the pathway stage is conducted by the pathway leads at the institutions that participate in that pathway, and is chaired by the pathway director (who is also one of the institutional pathway leads). Further details on this phase of the selection process appear in the separate document for pathway leads and pathway directors, available on the NINE DTP website.

## Assessment at the Studentship Committee stage is conducted by a committee consisting of the NINE DTP Director (who is the Durham academic lead), the NINE DTP Deputy Directors (who are the academic leads at Newcastle, Northumbria, and Queen’s Belfast), the remaining academic leads (from Sunderland, Teesside, and Ulster), and a number of external reviewers. At the Studentship Committee stage, each nomination that was forwarded on by a pathway is read by three individuals, at least two of whom are internal to the DTP but none of whom is from the same institution as the nominee. Prior to the meeting of the Studentship Committee, a composite score is made for each nominee, with two-thirds of the weight for this score coming from the mean score of the three committee members who read the nomination and one-third coming from the ranking given by the nominee’s pathway. Prior to the meeting of the Studentship Committee, the Action for Equality Committee (which consists of the seven directors) meets to select the Action for Equality awardees. Then, aided by the scoring that combines Studentship Committee reviews with pathway rankings, as well as by ESRC mandates concerning steers and international students, and also individual university requirements concerning matched funding, the Studentship Committee discusses each nominee’s file and makes awards (typically 50-55) as well as selecting a reserve list of up to 30 additional candidates.

## Feedback is not routinely returned to applicants, but some feedback may be provided at the request of individual supervisors.

# Part 3 / Further Information

1. If students or staff need any further information about the ESRC NINE DTP’s annual studentship competition please contact their local contact:

* **Durham - Katy Roberts / Rebecca Nash: contact.nine@durham.ac.uk**
* **Newcastle - Sarah Rylance: ninedtp.admin@ncl.ac.uk**
* **Northumbria – Andrea Percival:** 33T**andrea.percival@northumbria.ac.uk**33T
* **Queen’s University Belfast – Naomi Harland: nine.admin@qub.ac.uk**
* **Sunderland – Catherine Hayes: catherine.hayes@sunderland.ac.uk**
* **Teesside – Anthony Lloyd: anthony.lloyd@tees.ac.uk**3
* **Ulster University – Conor Murray: c.murray433T@ulster.ac.uk33T**

**Part 4 / Authorisation & Version Control**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Author:** | NINE DTP Director Philip Steinberg |
| **Version:** | 7 |
| **Changes from last version:** | * More detail on substantive focus of steers added. * Nomination process rewritten to address questions asked by supervisors and students. * Pathway-specific information moved into separate pathway document. |
| **Date Policy Last Approved:** | August 2024 |
| **Date of Next Review:** | Summer 2025 |

**Appendix 1: Eligibility 1**

P0F

**Please note: the following criteria apply to all UKRI Studentships**

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 requirement) or,
* Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

UK National

The UK includes the United Kingdom and Islands (i.e. the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man).

In terms of residency requirements for UK nationals, for courses starting from 1 August 2021, candidates will continue to be eligible for home fee status as long as:

* they were living in the EEA or Switzerland on 31 December 2020, and have lived in the EEA, Switzerland, the UK or Gibraltar for at least the last 3 years before starting a course in the UK
* have lived continuously in the EEA, Switzerland, the UK or Gibraltar between 31 December 2020 and the start of the course
* the course starts before 1 January 2028

Eligibility on these grounds will only be available for courses starting up to seven years from the last day of the transition period (i.e. on 31 December 2027 at the latest).

Children of UK nationals will also be eligible for support on the same terms, even if they are not themselves UK nationals, as long as both the UK national and the child meet the conditions listed above.

This is following the announcement made by [33Thttps://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-nationals-in-the-eea-and-](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-nationals-in-the-eea-and-switzerland-access-to-higher-education-and-19-further-education) [switzerland-access-to-higher-education-and-19-further-education33T](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-nationals-in-the-eea-and-switzerland-access-to-higher-education-and-19-further-education)

The above residency requirements will not apply to Irish nationals living in the UK and Ireland whose right to study and to access benefits and services will be preserved on a reciprocal basis for UK and Irish nationals under the Common Travel Area arrangement.

It will also not apply to those EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals benefitting from Citizens’ Rights under the EU Withdrawal Agreement, EEA EFTA Separation Agreement or Swiss Citizens’ Rights Agreement respectively.

Temporary absence

A UK national may have spent an extended period living outside the UK, either for study or employment and still be eligible for home fee status. Candidates in these circumstances are required to show that they have maintained a relevant connection with their home country and therefore claim that the absence was temporary. ‘Temporary’ does not depend solely on the length of absence.

**EU Settlement Scheme**

EU, EEA or Swiss citizens can apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021. If successful, applicants will get either settled or pre-settled status.

1 Applicants for the Action for Equality scheme need to meet all of the standard eligibility requirements, but must also be UK- domiciled candidates from Black British, British Asian or mixed Black or Asian Heritage.

Settled status

Applicants will usually get settled status if they:

* started living in the UK by 31 December 2020
* lived in the UK for a continuous 5-year period (known as ‘continuous residence’)

Five years’ continuous residence means that for 5 years in a row they have been in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for at least 6 months in any 12-month period. The exceptions are:

* one period of up to 12 months for an important reason (for example, childbirth, serious illness, study, vocational training or an overseas work posting)
* compulsory military service of any length
* time spent abroad as a Crown servant, or as the family member of a Crown servant
* time spent abroad in the armed forces, or as the family member of someone in the armed forces

If they have settled status, they can spend up to 5 years in a row outside the UK without losing that status. If they are a Swiss citizen, they and their family members can spend up to 4 years in a row outside the UK without losing their settled status.

Pre-settled status

If applicants do not have 5 years’ continuous residence when they apply to the EU settlement scheme, they will usually get pre-settled status. They must have started living in the UK by 31 December 2020.

Those with pre-settled status will qualify as a home student if they have 3 years residency in the UK/EEA/Gibraltar/Switzerland immediately before the start of their course.

It is then possible to apply to change this to settled status once they have got 5 years’ continuous residence. They must do this before the pre-settled status expires. They can stay in the UK for a further 5 years from the date they get pre-settled status.

If they have pre-settled status, they can spend up to 2 years in a row outside the UK without losing their status. They will need to maintain their continuous residence if they want to qualify for settled status.

Indefinite leave to remain (ILR) or Indefinite leave to enter (ILE) Indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILR) are types of immigration status.

It is possible to continue to live in the UK without applying to the EU Settlement Scheme if they have indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK. However, if they choose to apply (and meet all the other conditions), they will get ‘indefinite leave to remain under the EU Settlement Scheme’ - also known as settled status.

They can spend up to 2 years in a row outside the UK without losing their indefinite leave to enter or remain status. International Student

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

# Appendix 2 / Timetable

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date(s)** | **Activity/Milestone** |
| **Monday 20 January 2025 (1600hrs)** | Application deadline to the Institution’s Department or  School |
|  |  |
| **Monday 10 February 2025 (1600hrs)** | Deadline for departments / schools to submit nominations to prospective Pathways. From this date forward no modifications may be made to candidates' nomination files |
|  |  |
| **Tuesday 11 February to Monday 24 February 2025** | Pathways conduct cross-institutional review of all nominations and select candidates to put forward to the final  Studentship panel |
|  |  |
| **Tuesday 25 February 2025 (1600hrs)** | **Nominations submitted by Pathways to the NINE DTP. (All nominations to be sent using the ESRC Postgraduate Studentship Nomination Form to** [**contact.nine@durham.ac.uk**](mailto:contact.nine@durham.ac.uk)**)** |
|  |  |
| **Thursday 27 February 2025** | Nominations sent to Studentship Committee for review. (NINE DTP Academic Leads and 4 or 5 external reviewers). |
|  |  |
| **Friday 28 February to**  **Wednesday 25 March 2025** | Nominations reviewed by the Studentship Committee. |
|  |  |
| **Wednesday 26 March 2025** | Submission of Studentship Committee scores to the DTP  Manager. |
|  |  |
| **Tuesday 1 April 2025** | NINE DTP Studentships Committee convenes to review and confirm nominations. Candidates will be informed of the outcomes of the competition in the weeks that follow. |

**Appendix 3 / ESRC NINE DTP Studentship Assessment Scheme**

## MARKING SCHEME

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Percentage** | **Grade** | **Sections Marked Out of 30** | **Sections Marked Out of 40** |
| **Very Strong** | >80% | **A\*** | 26-30 | 33-40 |
| **Strong** | 70 to 80% | **A** | 22-25 | 28-32 |
| **Fair** | 60-69% | **B** | 18-21 | 24-27 |
| **Poor** | <60% | **C** | 0-17 | 0-23 |

**SCORING PROFILES**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Award Type** | **Background, References & Qualifications** | **Research Proposal** | **Supervisory-Fit & Research Environment** | **Collaboration** |
| **4.5 & 5.5 Studentships**  (and masters + doctoral only  part-time nominations) | **40** | **30** | **30** | **N/A** |
| **3.5, 4, & 5 Studentships**  (and doctoral only part-time  nominations) | **30** | **40** | **30** | **N/A** |
| **4.5 & 5.5 Collaborative Studentships**  (and masters + doctoral only  part-time nominations) | **40** | **30** | **30** | **30** |
| **3.5, 4, & 5 Collaborative Studentships**  (and doctoral only part-time  nominations) | **30** | **40** | **30** | **30** |

All scores are pro-rata’ed to be out of 100 when collated.

Please note that overall scores are considered such that applicants with scores of over 80 are considered fundable and under 75 are not. Scores of 76 – 80 are considered borderline.

## MARKING CRITERIA

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Criteria & Guidance** |
| **Background & Testimonials** | This section includes the qualifications and references of candidates and reviewers should focus on the candidate’s potential to successfully complete their planned research. At least a **good 2:1 is required at undergraduate level is expected from conventional candidates**. A g**ood Masters degree and/or significant relevant profession experience** should also be recognised and can be used to show a positive academic/intellectual trajectory, particularly for candidates from non-traditional academic backgrounds. The CV and personal statement can also evidence an applicant’s potential. |
|  | **For candidates applying for 3.5, 4, or 5 year studentships**, reviewers should examine **previous qualifications** to see if they are suitable for the candidate’s project. They should focus carefully on the extent to which the **references** support the applicant. A strong reference will focus on the particular abilities of the candidate that make them most suited for postgraduate research and should support them unreservedly. A weak reference will indicate significant problems or provide ‘stock’ or general replies that add no value to the nomination. |
|  | **For candidates applying for 4.5 or 5.5 year studentships**, reviewers use the same criteria as above, but appreciate that they will need to focus on the potential of the candidate because they are at an earlier stage of their career. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Criteria & Guidance** |
| **Research Proposal** | Nominations should very clearly outline, articulate and explain the research questions, the relevant supporting body of research in the discipline, and the methodology that will be adopted, together with the relevance and potential impact of the research.  Candidates and their supervisors should ensure the research proposed is feasible both in relation to the limits of the funding available from the DTP and the duration of study.  In advance of submitting the proposal we recommend that candidates and their supervisors cost their proposals to ensure that UK fieldwork and RTSG costs (ca £3,000 per student across their PhD) can be delivered within the funds available if necessary; further, if the candidate is seeking Overseas Fieldwork or Difficult Language training, they should similarly ensure that the research can be delivered within the financial restrictions of the grant i.e. with a contribution of up to £7,500 from NINE DTPP. Supervisors and pathway leads should recognise that the DTP is unable to support students with any funds (including stipend and fees) at any location to which the FCDO advise against travel. We would generally not encourage applications from candidates whose fieldwork includes travel to locations to which the FCDO advise against travel if that travel advice is unlikely to change. Furthermore, we would encourage all supervisors and applicants to recognise that they may need to make contingency plans to ensure that the PhD can be completed even if the fieldwork needs to be significantly altered owing to FCDO travel advice. |
|  | **For candidates applying for 3.5, 4, or 5 year studentships**, a strong application will have a **well-defined proposal and researchable questions** or hypotheses, and the candidate will have identified **relevant sources**, outlined and justified an **appropriate methodology**, shown an awareness of the potential use of the research, and will have a **feasible timetable for completing the research within three and a half years (for full- time candidates)**. The proposal should normally build on and complement the candidate’s CV and background.  Reviewers should consider if the research is likely to **raise ethical or safety issues, which may mean that the research cannot be approved**. Furthermore, Reviewers should give particular attention to any articulation of the potential impact and knowledge exchange arising from the research. |
|  | **For candidates applying for 4.5 or 5.5 year studentships,** the emphasis is on the **potential of the research area that the candidate intends to develop during their Master’s degree and subsequent PhD, and how this relates to their background and experience**. Reviewers may consider why the candidate has chosen to complete a PhD and what they seek to gain from it. A strong application will demonstrate an interest in and understanding of the proposed research area, its importance and wider context and the possible methodology and timescale. A weak application would be poorly focused with little appreciation of the research area, robust methodology and timescale. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Criteria & Guidance** |
| **Supervisory-Fit & Research Environment** | Nominations need to address the research strengths of their host Pathway’s discipline and those of their proposed supervisory team – including reference to publications, grants and other related research outputs – and their suitability to the student and their research project. Pathways should outline how the candidate will or has obtained the key **research and disciplinary training needed by them to successfully complete research within 3 and a half years (for full-time award-holders)**.  If the candidate has completed the required core research methods training this should be confirmed, but, if not, this aspect must be dealt with in more detail.  A strong nomination will give due consideration to the research strengths and environment of the Pathway and of the candidate’s supervisory team – including research centres or special facilities or research projects – that make it appropriate for the Pathway and the supervisory team to host the candidate. The quality of the supervisory team is important, but so too is the fit of the candidate, their project and the supervisor team’s research and previous track-record of PhD supervision. A strong nomination will be where supervisory teams have the necessary expertise and demonstrate an active contribution to the disciplinary area. In a weak application the supervisory team will not be expert in the disciplinary area and/or the Pathway does not constitute the suitable environment in which to host the research proposed.  Reviewers should check that the previous research training of the candidate is suitable for their proposed research and consider if there are any weaknesses or limitations to the support on offer to successfully completed the planned research within 3.5 years (for full-time award-holders).  In detailing how the supervisor and institution will support the training needs of the candidate, supervisors should consider not only masters-level training, but further the personal, professional and researcher development courses and training the candidate will require to complete their thesis, and develop the kind of personal and professional qualities to pursue future career goals or research opportunities.  Generic department / school / Pathway statements regarding general facilities available to the student will be considered much weaker than statements tailored to the specific needs of the student and the research project. |
| **Collaboration** | The name of the collaborator, a contact for the collaborative partner, a **statement indicating the collaborative partner’s support for the project, including their contribution to it both in terms of the substantive research and the financial and in-kind aspects of the project, must be provided.** The Pathway will also provide a statement of what is entailed in the collaborative element of the nomination and what it adds to the candidate’s research from an academic perspective.  **A strong collaboration will provide significant added value to the academic research project,** placement experience, access to source materials or novel access to research opportunities. A strong collaboration will also be able to provide evidence of existing engagement by the applicant with the partner organisation. There will be evidence of clear complementarities between the research and the partner’s activities, and this can be used  to demonstrate the potential impact of the research, but there will also be a very strong |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Criteria & Guidance** |
|  | academic motivation for the project. There will be evidence of substantive and sustained  engagement with the project and support for the applicant by the partner organisation.  **A weak collaboration will add little to the candidate’s planned research** and will make a limited academic contribution. A weak collaboration will also provide little evidence of prior engagement by the applicant with the partner organisations. The collaboration will be considered weak if there is little evidence of substantive and sustained engagement by the partner organisation with either the research project or with supervision of the applicant. Where this is negligible, the collaboration should be **scored as 0**. Collaboration consistently solely of a placement with no other evidence of engagement should be considered weak and **scored at 0 as there will be a lack of evidence that the collaboration is truly embedded and contributes to the academic aims of the studentship**.  Specific emphasis and recognition should be given to the **potential impact and knowledge exchange** opportunities arising from the collaboration. A strong nomination will be aware of these considerations and articulate potential pathways to impact, which the award-  holder will be following during the course of studies. |