

KEY FEATURES OF BBSRC DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

This annex details ten key features of the proposed Doctoral Training Partnerships scheme:

- i. Continued competitive assessment of training strategy and environment
- ii. Concentration to protect major training centres: around 15 DTPs to be awarded
- iii. Institution-level or multi-institution bids only, with a minimum threshold of £17.5M in BBSRC research grant spend over three-years required for eligibility
- iv. Institutions will work to a Portfolio Agreement
- v. Applicants will be asked to identify and support vulnerable capabilities and strategically important and vulnerable subjects
- vi. No mandatory CASE requirement
- vii. Notional studentship cost to be calculated on a 4-year basis, and provision of £5k p.a. research training support grant (RTSG)
- viii. Support for Professional Internships for PhD Students
- ix. Use of funding data and analysis within the assessment process to inform decisions and allocations
- x. Significant role for BBSRC in strategic engagement / post-award monitoring

In addition to the ten key features please refer to the RCUK Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training¹, the Research Council Common Terminology for Postgraduate Training², and the RCUK Joint Vision for Collaborate Training³ for further information.

i. Continued competitive assessment of training strategy and environment

- The first BBSRC DTP competition awarded DTP Training Grants *via* a competitive assessment process.
- We recognise the value of a competitive approach in driving up standards, as against using an algorithmically-based allocation route, and will continue to operate a competitive assessment process for the second call for DTPs.

ii. Concentration to protect major training centres: around 15 DTPs to be awarded

- The indicative number of approximately 15 DTPs will allow sizeable investments to be made in each Partnership, with a minimum of 5 studentships p.a. (it has been suggested that a DTP with fewer than 5 studentships p.a. may not be able to offer the same opportunities for cohort activities, joint skills-training, and personal development that larger partnerships can provide, which may reduce the added value of the scheme).
- The concentration of funding on major training centres provides DTPs with the flexibility to use the training grant in a more strategic way, and encourages joined-up thinking and the sharing of best practice within or between institutions.
- The concentration also enables strategic engagement between Partnerships and BBSRC, and inter-partnership best practice sharing.

iii. Institution-level or multi-institution bids only, with a minimum threshold of £17.5M in BBSRC research grant spend over three-years required for eligibility

- The first BBSRC DTP competition allowed Research Organisations to bid for Training Grants at an institution-level or multi-institution level only
- The requirement that bids be institutional or multi-institutional has allowed for the sharing of good practice across an institution and between institutions; it promotes greater integration and strategic coordination in the provision of PhD

¹ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/statementofexpectation.pdf>

² <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/RCUKCommonTerminologyforPostgraduateTraining2013.pdf>

³ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/rcdvision.pdf>

training; and facilitates greater interdisciplinary and inter-department and – institution research and training.

- We continue to strongly encourage institution-wide or multi-institutional bids.

iv. Institutions will work to a Portfolio Agreement

- The first BBSRC DTP competition required Partnerships to submit a Portfolio Agreement which was assessed as part of their bid.
- The Portfolio Agreement outlines how the DTP will align its research training to BBSRC's priority research areas. It outlines a number of key aspects of PhD training and programme management that Partnerships commit to providing (e.g. the Professional Internship for PhD Students scheme, appropriate governance arrangements for the partnership, supervisor training, etc.).
- The Portfolio Agreement forms the basis of our Partnership 'contract' with the DTPs for the provision of excellent research training and is also used for on-going dialogue and monitoring.
- We will continue to use Portfolio Agreements as part of the assessment process for DTPs and in our on-going strategic engagement and monitoring activities.

v. Applicants will be asked to identify and support vulnerable capabilities and strategically important and vulnerable subjects

- BBSRC recognises that the UK's internationally competitive bioscience sector is reliant on highly professional, highly trained people with advanced technical knowledge and skills working in both the public and private sector.
- In order to maintain an adequate supply of these researchers for UK bioscience, BBSRC supports training and development across its remit, focused largely (but not exclusively) at doctoral-level studentships.
- The first BBSRC DTP competition asked Partnerships to describe how they would address strategically important and vulnerable niche skills through training and research projects.
- DTPs will commit, as part of their Portfolio Agreement, to identifying and supporting, where appropriate, research and training to address vulnerable capabilities, and strategically important and vulnerable subjects within the context of their broader research training strategy.

vi. No mandatory CASE requirement

vii. Notional studentship cost to be calculated on a 4-year basis, and provision of £5k p.a. research training support grant (RTSG)

- The first BBSRC DTP competition awarded £5K p.a. RTSG to stress *quality* research training above quantity of low-cost provision.
- As part of their Portfolio Agreement, Partnerships will be asked to commit to ensuring that the research training support funding is used strategically to support bioscience research training.

viii. Support for Professional Internships for PhD Students

- The first BBSRC DTP competition introduced the Professional Internships for PhD Students – a mandatory three-month integrated work placement.
- The PIPS scheme will be continued, but following feedback at the DTP Best Practice Workshop, £1000 per-student will be provided to help support the students undertake their internships.

ix. Use of funding data and analysis within the assessment process to inform decisions and allocations

- The first BBSRC DTP competition used information on the portfolio of grant funding held by the Partnership, in order to inform the assessment process.
- We will provide the Assessment Panel with up-to-date information on BBSRC research spend against its priority research areas, and also data on the portfolio of research grant income for the Partners to inform its decision.

x. Significant and enhanced role for BBSRC in strategic engagement / post-award monitoring

- A key element in ensuring that institutions keep to the commitments made in their Portfolio Agreements will be on-going strategic engagement from BBSRC and its nominees.
- The current DTPs host visits from BBSRC at their Management Board Meetings. In addition, DTP leads and operational managers have attended a DTP Best Practice Workshop hosted by BBSRC. The intention is to continue these strategic engagement activities.