

Announcement of Opportunity: BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships

Application deadline: 1 May 2014.

Summary

BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships provide PhD training in areas of research relevant to BBSRC's remit and priority research areas. In addition, Doctoral Training Partnerships also provide a breadth of professional development training opportunities to enhance student's capability and develop the world-class, highly skilled workforce the UK needs for its future.

Building on the success of its first Doctoral Training Partnerships programme¹, institution-level or multi-institution bids are invited to apply to the second call for BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships. Ten key features of the second DTP scheme are at **Annex 1**.

The deadline for receipt of full proposals is **1 May 2014**.

A set of FAQs is available on the BBSRC website at www.bbsrc.ac.uk/dtp

Background

The BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP) scheme was launched in 2011 as a successor to the Quota Doctoral Training Grant competition that last ran 2007-11. The current programme supports 14 Doctoral Training Partnerships, which include a total of 44 Research Organisations².

The 14 Partnerships work with BBSRC to ensure PhD students are trained in research areas aligned with our research portfolio and priority research areas, whilst also ensuring that students receive training in the core bioscience skills, generic and professional skills and have the advanced knowledge required for careers in research and other economically productive roles in the wider economy.

Number of Awards and Funding Available

It is anticipated that up to 15 Doctoral Training Partnerships will be awarded. The total funding available will support in the region of **up to 250 four-year studentships p.a. for up to five intakes** (from October 2015-19), and will be awarded in the form of single profiled Training Grants. The normal flexibility of Research Council Training Grants will apply, enabling institutions to part-fund studentships from other sources.

The funding for each four-year studentship will include £5k p.a. research training support costs, as well as student stipend and fees at standard Research Council levels. Each student will take a three-month internship during their PhD, to experience working in an area not directly related to their PhD project. To help support the students undertake this internship, an additional £1000 per student will be provided within the training grant.

¹ <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/dtp>

² <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/PreviousAwards/dtp-allocations-2012-14.pdf>

Eligibility

BBSRC is keen to see the training of students in broad-based centres of research excellence which promote and facilitate multi-disciplinary working and expose the students to a wide range of expertise. To this end, BBSRC will only award institutional-level and multi-institutional level Partnerships, and wishes to encourage partnerships between Research Organisations in addressing its training priorities. Through this approach, BBSRC intends to promote integrated strategies for research and training which meet BBSRC's strategic priorities, address vulnerable capabilities and strategically important and vulnerable areas, and foster inter-disciplinarity.

Proposals may be submitted by eligible Research Organisations either individually or in collaboration, provided the eligible Research Organisation(s) applying hold a minimum of £17.5M BBSRC research grant spend over the three year period from 2010/11 to 2012/13. **Annex 2** provides a list of Research Organisations and their BBSRC grant spend during this period, excluding Institute Strategic Programme Grant (ISPG) funding.

Non-eligible institutions/organisations may be included as 'Associate Partners' on a Doctoral Training Partnership application, providing the Partnership can demonstrate that there is significant added value/benefit to the inclusion of these 'Associate Partners' within the Partnership. BBSRC research grant spend from non-eligible institutions / Associate Partners will not count towards the minimum threshold.

Multi-institutional bids are strongly encouraged and it is anticipated that the majority of Doctoral Training Partnerships awarded will be of this nature. Research Organisations intending to submit an individual proposal, not in partnership with others, should contact BBSRC to discuss this.

Any proposal must be *either* institution-wide *or* multi-institutional, and a Research Organisation may **only submit one proposal** as lead applicant. A DTP **must** include a degree-awarding Research Organisation within the Partnership.

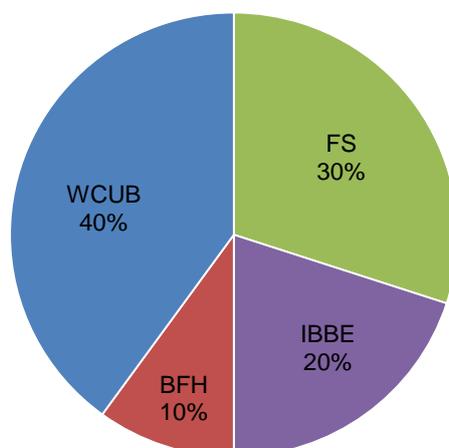
Research Organisations will normally only be involved in one DTP proposal. However, there may be circumstances where a Research Organisation wishes to make a case to be part of two or more Partnerships. For example, the Research Organisation may decide that a particular department should be part of a DTP proposal based on *a specific subject area*, while the remainder of the Research Organisation is part of a second Partnership on *a different research area*. This is permissible, but Research Organisations are advised to consider carefully the implications of this approach.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact BBSRC office for advice if Research Organisations are considering being part of more than one Partnership. If a Research Organisation does wish to be involved in more than one Partnership there must be no double counting of research grant spend: a group or department (and the staff and funding involved) cannot itself be included in more than one proposal. The Research Organisations in a DTP will be expected to demonstrate full commitment to the Partnerships in which they are involved, and Partnerships will be terminated if they perform poorly due to a lack of commitment from the Research Organisations involved.

Strategic Alignment of research training to BBSRC's priority research areas

In the second call for BBSRC DTPs, BBSRC is seeking to invest in a portfolio of Partnerships that provides world-class PhD training and a balance between the 'general advancement of knowledge' (world class underpinning bioscience) and its priority research areas. BBSRC seeks to invest in training across its portfolio, ideally in the proportions shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Target allocation of DTP studentships by BBSRC strategic research area for the second DTP call. (FS: Agriculture and food security; IBBE: Industrial biotechnology and bioenergy; BFH: Bioscience for health; WCUB: World class underpinning bioscience).



In the second call for DTPs, BBSRC is seeking to maintain capacity in Industrial biotechnology and bioenergy (IBBE) (which was significantly increased during the first DTP scheme) and increase the number of students it supports in Food security (FS) and Bioscience for health (BFH).

There is, however, no expectation that an individual DTP proposal should seek to cover the full range of BBSRC's priorities. Research Organisations are advised to play to their research strengths, but where they are seeking to use the DTP to grow capacity in a research area they must justify their rationale.

As part of their proposal, institutions should explain how they will ensure that the PhD projects fall wholly within BBSRC's remit, or how they will use the Training Grant flexibility to obtain joint-funding with other Research Councils or sponsors as necessary.

In addition to supporting a balanced portfolio, BBSRC seeks to support vulnerable capabilities and strategically important and vulnerable research areas. Partnerships are asked to describe how they will identify and support research and training to address vulnerable capabilities and strategically important and vulnerable subjects within the context of their broader research strategy.

To complement this world-class research training, Partnerships are expected to describe how they intend to support training in the:

- Core bioscience skills (mathematics, bioinformatics and statistics, e.g. through the SysMIC programme³),
- Generic and professional skills⁴.

Institutional Commitment and Co-Funding

It is important for BBSRC to form partnerships with institutions which have a clear and long-term strategy for developing their bioscience research, and where this is backed up by recent and on-going investment by the institutions involved. Therefore, in assessing proposals to become Doctoral Training Partnerships, BBSRC will ask its Assessment Panel to take account of the investment that institutions are committed to making in their bioscience research and training relevant to BBSRC remit. This may be

³ <http://sysmic.ac.uk/home.html>

⁴ <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Researcher-Development-Framework.html>

through the co-funding of additional studentships, a commitment to enhanced training grants or improved access to research facilities.

BBSRC also welcomes proposals which are able to use BBSRC's investment to leverage additional funding from other sources, for example, Local Enterprise Partnerships, other Research Council Training Grants, industry or regional bodies. The leverage of funding must fit with BBSRC's remit, and is particularly welcome where it supports BBSRC's priority research areas. Where Research Organisations are involved in international partnerships relevant to BBSRC's priorities, proposals may also wish to explain how their PhD training programme may attract international students and investment from international sponsors, bearing in mind that BBSRC does not permit the funding of students (including international students) on grants⁵.

There is no requirement to convert a certain proportion of studentships to CASE studentships. However, collaborative studentships are still welcome, and Partnerships may wish to highlight any specific arrangement with CASE partners⁶.

Where Associate Partners are named on a DTP application, the partnership must demonstrate that there is significant added value/benefit to the inclusion of these Associate Partners. This may include (although is not limited to) financial commitments to underwrite a number of studentships or CASE conversions, and/or commitment to cover the costs of access to facilities or training that cannot be otherwise provided by an eligible institution, and/or strategic links to an important stakeholder or user.

Awards

Awards will be made in the form of profiled DTP Training Grants to the lead Research Organisation in the proposal. The DTP Training Grant will support up to five intakes of students (October 2015-19). Successful Partnerships will be supported for three years in the first instance, with the final two years of funding linked to the outcomes of a light-touch mid-term review.

The cash limit of the grant will be specified and information will be given on the number of studentships this could support. However, the indicative number of studentships given is for guidance only. The flexibility of Training Grant Terms and Conditions means that Research Organisations can seek part-funding from other sources to increase the number of studentships being supported provided they are within BBSRC's remit. Equally, Research Organisations may choose to draw a larger proportion of funds for student experimental work and fund fewer students.

The Terms and Conditions for Research Council Training Grants are available on the BBSRC website⁷.

Monitoring Arrangements and Partnership with BBSRC

In submitting a proposal to become a BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership, the Research Organisations involved thereby agree to comply with monitoring arrangements established by BBSRC, and to work in partnership with BBSRC to support its priorities for PhD training.

Institutions will be asked to report annually on their provision of training and this will be reviewed by BBSRC and its nominees in connection with the Portfolio Agreement between BBSRC and the institutions.

BBSRC wishes to continue a high level of engagement with successful partnerships in order to support Research Organisations in their postgraduate work. This will include the Research Organisations being

⁵ http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidelines/studentship_eligibility.pdf

⁶ <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/studentships/case.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Legal/training-grants-terms-conditions.pdf>

able to seek advice on issues which may emerge in their management of the DTP, as well as enable BBSRC to provide guidance on emerging skills issues and policy developments.

The monitoring and engagement activities are therefore likely to include:

- Annual reports to BBSRC,
- Hosting an annual Partnership visit by BBSRC staff and its nominees,
- Attending a mid-term review meeting to assess the performance of the DTP and to inform our decision to release the final two years of funding,
- Provision of accurate and timely information on student project to BBSRC via the Je-S Student Details Portal,
- Good practice sharing events.

Assessment

The assessment of proposals to become BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships, which will include an interview with the management team of the proposed Partnerships, will be carried out in July 2014 and announcements regarding the allocation of funding will be made in October 2014. The interview date will be made available on the BBSRC website⁸ in late January 2014.

In making its decisions, the Assessment Panel will assess the information provided by applicants as part of their DTP proposal. The Panel will also draw on information provided by BBSRC on the current research grant portfolio, training grant portfolio and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Finance Statistics Return data (where available) of the Research Organisations involved in each Partnership.

An analysis of the studentship project details which have been returned to BBSRC through the Je-S Student Details Portal (SDP) will also be presented to the Assessment Panel. **Institutions are strongly advised to ensure that their Je-S SDP data returns are complete and accurate.**

BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships are assessed competitively against three main criteria:

- Excellence of research and alignment of PhD training to BBSRC's remit and priority research areas
- Excellence of the PhD training programme and training environment across the institutions involved in the Partnership
- Quality of management of the training programme, supervision of the students, and governance of the Partnership

Detailed assessment criteria for the competition are given in **Annex 3**.

BBSRC will be advising its Assessment Panel to award a balanced portfolio of Partnerships which can provide excellence of training *and* an overall balance between 'general advancement of knowledge' (through the support of world-class underpinning bioscience) and its priority research areas.

⁸ <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/dtp>

How to Apply

Institutions are strongly encouraged to read in full the background information provided in order to better address the requirements of the call, including:

- DTP2 main call text
- Annex 1 – Key features of BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships
- Annex 2 – BBSRC research grant income and eligibility threshold
- Annex 3 – BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships assessment criteria

A set of attachments which should be completed for BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership applications and uploaded with the Training Grant application are available on the BBSRC website, including:

- DTP2 - Cover Letter and Mission Statement
- DTP2 - Portfolio Agreement Attachment
- DTP2 - Publications Attachment
- DTP2 - Research Funding Attachment
- DTP2 - Performance Indicators Attachment

A set of FAQs accompanying this call is available on the BBSRC website. These will be updated to provide answers to frequently asked questions.

Proposals must be submitted using the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system. The call will be available on Je-S from 10 January 2014. **Applicants should select the following from the Je-S menus:**

- Council: **BBSRC**
- Document Type: **Studentship proposal**
- Scheme: **Training grants**
- Call/Type/Mode: **Doctoral Training Partnerships 2nd Call**

Document checklist

The table below details the document types which need to be included in the application. **Template documents can be found on the BBSRC webpage⁹ and documents must be submitted in this format.** Guidelines for completion are found on the template documents.

Documents should be submitted ***using a minimum Arial 11pt, and you should maintain margins of at least 2cm (left and right).***

Document	Document type in Je-S
Cover Letter and Mission Statement	Proposal Cover Letter
Portfolio Agreement Attachment	Case for Support
Publications Attachment	Other Attachment
Research Funding Attachment	Other Attachment
Performance Indicators Attachment	Studentship Proposal Performance Indicators

⁹ <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/dtp>

Further Information

If you have any queries regarding the completion of the Je-S studentship application form, please contact the Je-S Help Desk:

- Email: JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk
- Phone: 01793 444164
- Staffed Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding Bank holidays and other holidays)

For other queries relating to the requirements of the competition, please contact ntp@bbsrc.ac.uk.