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| COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL AWARD (CDA)**GUIDANCE NOTES****October 2024 entry** |

North-West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDTP) Collaborative Doctoral Award studentships provide opportunities for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) based in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) to gain first-hand experience of research work outside an academic environment. PGRs work on a doctoral project supported by a supervisory team including a non-Higher Education Institution partner organisation. They may spend time working in the partner organisation. Examples of previous CDA projects can be found on [our website](http://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/partners/collaborative-phds/).

The application form is found here:

**NWCDTP particularly welcomes applications for projects likely to attract applicants from communities that are under-represented in Higher Education Institution research cohorts.**

**Application Process**

**Proposal stage**

A supervisory team and a non-HEI partner organisation collaborate to develop a proposal and submit a CDA Application Form.

Proposals should be developed in light of our **assessment criteria** (see below). Potential candidates may be involved in this development and their contribution articulated as part of the case for **partnership fit**.

**Pathway Panels**

CDA applications and proposals will initially be assessed by Pathway Panels consisting of the Overall Pathway Lead and Institutional Pathway Representatives. Each application is judged on its own merits based on the information provided in the AHRC CDA Application Form. The Panel agrees on a mark for each CDA proposal and application, and the applications are then ranked. The Institutional Pathway Panels will then forward their selected applications to NWCDTP@manchester.ac.uk so that they can then be considered by the NWCDTP CDA Allocation Panel.

**Final Allocation Panel**

The CDA Allocation Panel, which will meet in November to make the decision on funding, will include all NWCDTP Academic Leads from each institution (members of the Academic Management Committee). This panel will consider all applications and make its decisions based on the nominations of the Pathways and any other necessary considerations such as EDI and strategic need.

**Non-HEI Partner Organisation Eligibility**

Collaborating partners can be private sector companies, public sector bodies, co-operatives or voluntary organisations. A private sector company is defined as being at least 50% privately owned with a ‘wealth-creation’ base in the United Kingdom. Certain public sector bodies such as UK-owned companies in which the government holds more than a 49% stake, but which generate at least 60% of their income from outside the UK government or other UK public sector sources, are also included in this definition.

A sole trader will not *normally* partner with the NWCDTP although each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Organisations based overseas may be eligible. However, they must have established UK-based research and/or production capability and be able to provide the PGR with an opportunity to gain skills not currently available in the UK. In identifying an appropriate collaborating partner(s) and reaching an agreement on the arrangements for the research project, applicants should consider our **assessment criteria** and how they might demonstrate **partnership fit**.

**Pathways**

CDA Applications must go through an eligible [NWCDTP Pathway](http://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/about/our-research-expertise/). Prospective applicants must contact the relevant Institutional Pathway Representative prior to submission of any CDA application to discuss the project.

If the application is successful, the Institutional Pathway Representative and the Institutional Lead should be involved in the recruitment and the Overall Pathway Lead should sign off on the choice of candidate, on behalf of the NWCDTP.

**Assessment Criteria**

Competition for scholarships is fierce. Pathways will rank and score each proposal by giving a mark of 1 (lowest)-10 (highest).

The application will be assessed in terms of cogency of exposition, structure and rigour, originality, design of the research and its feasibility, and partnership fit. This latter is the most important of the assessment criteria and represents 50% of the mark.

The relationship between the project and the partner should be embedded in the application. **Partnership fit** is the way that the application demonstrates the following:

* Clear evidence of the non-HEI partner’s active involvement in and contribution to the conception, design and planning of the proposed research
* The nature and quality of the contribution being offered by the non-HEI partner (to the proposed research, supervision, training)
* A clear expression of how the project contributes to the partner’s strategic and research priorities
* Meaningful knowledge exchange
* Wider social and community impact
* Dedicated and particular support offered by the partner institution (may include financial or material support)

**Partnership fit** *may* also involve some of the following:

* If a candidate has been involved, the qualities they bring the project (including academic achievement or professional experience) and evidence of their involvement in its development
* Outline of the relevant research environment at the non-HEI partner institution
* A record of previous collaboration between the supervisory team and the non-HEI partner

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| Grade | Descriptor |
| 9-10 | Outstanding proposal in terms of both cogency and originality. The research questions are excellent, there is strong engagement with the wider field, the methodology is appropriate and perhaps innovative. The intellectual importance of the project is clear and the proposal outlines in detail the contribution that the project will make to the field. The supervisory team fits well and the research is feasible within the period of study. Partnership fit is strong and very well evidenced. A high priority for funding. |
| 7-8 | A very strong proposal outlined clearly. Research questions are clear and well outlined, there is an understanding of the wider field and the methodology is appropriate. The candidate makes a good case for the intellectual importance of the project. The supervisory team is well matched to the project. The research is likely to be feasible within the period of study. Partnership fit is good and well evidenced. Worthy of considering for funding.  |
| 3-6 | A promising proposal with some limited weaknesses that need to be addressed. Research questions are clear, and there is some understanding of the wider field. The methodology is solid and the candidate has some awareness of the intervention that the project makes in the discipline or field. The supervisory team is good and the project will probably be feasible within the period of study. Partnership fit is satisfactory and evidenced. In the context of the NWCDTP competition this will not be possible to be considered for funding.  |
| 1-2 | Problematic proposal – would need further work before it could be firmly supported. |

**Recruiting a postgraduate researcher**

If a supervisory team and a non-HEI partner organisation’s CDA application is successful in the first phase of the competition, they will be invited to recruit a candidate to undertake the project. CDA Scholarships can be advertised on FindAPhD.com or jobs.ac.uk. Availability of funding for such advertisements should be discussed with Schools/Faculties in advance, as there is no funding available from the NWCDTP for advertising Scholarships. Academics should also utilise their own contacts and disciplinary mailing lists for publicity purposes.

CDA applications may have a candidate already associated with the project. Their involvement and what they contribute to the project may be considered as part of the **Partnership Fit**. We will no longer take details of the candidate at application stage other than those that might be offered by the team in the proposal.

When a suitable candidate is recruited, the supervisory team must submit a Nomination Form to the NWCDTP via email to NWCDTP@manchester.ac.uk (deadline for the submission can be found [here](https://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/partners/cda-partners-info/)). The Nomination Form should be signed by the Pathway Lead. Applications that are received by the NWCDTP after the deadline will not be accepted.

Should a project be successful in gaining a CDA funding award but fail to recruit a suitable candidate, the NWCDTP has the right to withdraw the award from the project and reallocate the funds.

**Nominated candidates need to be approved by the Allocation Committee. The Allocation Committee reserves the right to make a final decision regarding selected candidates.**

**Studentship Structure**

CDA Scholarships can be held on a +3.5 basis and may be either full-time or part-time.

**Eligibility**

The NWCDTP is committed to working with applicants from underrepresented communities and those from non-traditional academic backgrounds.

Our candidates typically have qualifications equivalent to a good honours degree (first or upper second class level) from an academic higher education institution. Applicants should normally possess or be studying for a postgraduate degree. Applicants can offer a combination of qualifications and experience. There is a clear outline of how we make our decision in ‘Assessment Criteria’, number 8 below.

Degrees gained outside the UK are recognised. The NWCDTP bases its assessments of qualifications attained outside the UK on the British Council’s NARIC guide.

Applicants who have already gained or completed the requirements for a doctoral degree in any subject, however funded, are not eligible to apply for NWCDTP funding.

The NWCDTP is able to offer up to 30% of its awards to international researchers (definition below). All funded postgraduate researchers, whether UK or International, will be eligible for a full award which includes a stipend to support living costs, and fees at the standard UKRI home fee rate. It is crucial to note that **we will only cover tuition fees up to the Home rate** (exact rate for 2023/24 subject to confirmation from UKRI). International tuition fees are usually substantially higher than this sum. In some institutions, these additional tuition fees may be paid for in a form of an additional bursary to the DTP scholarship, but in other cases it may be necessary for international candidates (including EU and EEA) to secure additional funding to cover the additional fees. It is therefore crucial that international candidates contact their local PGR Administrator (see appendix 2) before applying, to find out what the local arrangements are for your programme.

To be considered for the Home rate candidates must meet the following criteria:

* Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
* Have settled status, or
* Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
* Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

If a candidate does not meet the criteria above, they are classed as an International candidate. You can refer to UKRI Terms and Conditions for Training Grants for full details: <https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

**Financial Basis of the studentship**

A NWCDTP Studentship consists of:

* Payment of academic fees, at the standard RCUK rate.
* Maintenance stipend (£18,622, in 2023/24).
* Access to a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) fund for research related expenses including conference attendance, fieldwork expenses.
* Access to Overseas Institutional Visits (OIV) and Placements.
* Access to the Cohort Development Fund (CDF) to support the wider cohort, in organising events such as conference, workshops, public engagement events.

**Policy on multiple applications**

If a candidate is part of an **unsuccessful** CDA application they may still apply independently to the NWCDTP standard scholarship competition.

**Involvement of the non-HEI partner organisation**

The application should demonstrate **partnership fit**. Part of this will necessarily involve demonstrating the commitment of the partner to the project. This should be shown throughout the application (see our **assessment criteria**).

Non-HEI partners will be expected to provide a supervisor for the duration of the project and must consider alternative arrangements should the nominated supervisor become unable to fulfil this role at any point during the project. Supervision costs from the non-academic partner would not normally be considered a budgeted contribution to the project.

Material contributions could include resources such as office space at the non-HEI partner organisation’s offices, provision of specialist training courses, access to data and resources.

There are no compulsory financial contributions from the non-HEI partner organisation. If a non-HEI partner organisation wishes to contribute financially, the most appropriate financial arrangement for each project should be discussed and agreed prior to the submission of the application. There are positive benefits to the partner offering a financial contribution as the stipend would be increased and this is likely to attract higher quality candidates, particularly where experience of employment as well as an appropriate academic background is being sought. If the partner wishes to contribute financially, details of payments/invoices should be arranged on an *ad hoc* basis with the HEI where the postgraduate researcher will be based, and the details of the process should be part of the formal agreement with the partner, if the application is successful.

If the CDA project requires a significant amount of travel, the non-HEI partner organisation may be asked to make a contribution towards the travel, subsistence and accommodation costs incurred by the PGR associated with visits to the non-HEI partner organisation.

**Letters of Support**

The non-HEI partner will need to attach a letter of support to confirm that they endorse the application. This should be no more than 2 sides of A4 on headed paper. It should be written when the proposal is being prepared and should be targeted specifically to the project.

The letter of support should recapitulate the involvement of the partner, the relevance of the project to the organisation and its potential impact to the organisation. If any resource is offered, whether monetary or in-kind, this should be outlined. The letter of support should identify the nature of the collaboration, how the partner will provide added value to the project, and what the project will enable for the organisation itself. The letter and the application form should be signed by a senior member of the organisation with the authority to make such a decision. The letter should outline supervision arrangements and in particular frameworks in place should the named supervisor leave the organisation. The letter of support should outline the structures in place to support and involve the PGR within the organisation.

**Formal Agreement**

Once a candidate has been appointed, a signed formal agreement must be produced between the non-HEI partner and the HEI at which they will be based. The supervisory team is responsible for pursuing this, with the support of University Contracts teams.

This agreement must be finalised and sent to the NWCDTP prior to the commencement of the candidate’s PhD programme in October 2023.

Please submit any queries about the NWCDTP CDA Scholarship Competition to nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk.

**Reporting and communications**

It is a condition of funding that the CDA research team – PGRs, academic and non-HEI supervisors – commit to disseminating and communicating the results of the CDA research. Specifically, CDA PGRs will lead on the collection of materials to be disseminated by engaging with the supervisory team as required, in order to submit the following:

1. By the end of semester 1 (28 February): Complete a [*Case Study form*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qHsI1dkKdf4k16AG1Olkf0m0Gg5MnEno/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106108979181897803965&rtpof=true&sd=true) *(Section 1)* and send it to the NWCDTP via email. This will be used by NWCDTP to create a profile of the project for dissemination via the NWCDTP website and related networks.
2. By the end of year 2 (31 July): Submit a 250-500 word blog post on the research progress and personal experience of the CDA, that can be shared online to showcase the project and give voice to the PGR’s personal experience of managing it.
3. On CDA completion (within one month of PhD submission, before VIVA): Submit an online Researcher Feedback Form and complete the [*Case Study form (Section 2)*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qHsI1dkKdf4k16AG1Olkf0m0Gg5MnEno/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106108979181897803965&rtpof=true&sd=true)which will be used to disseminate the project’s results. The form calls for feedback and testimonials from the PGR, the academic supervisor and the industry partner.

In addition, the NWCDTP can support the PGR’s research team to develop a more detailed [Comms Plan](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1siBbe2HBWMWsv-lHk8OmN3gbFgH97oFT/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106108979181897803965&rtpof=true&sd=true) to embed engagement and impact in the project from an early stage, so that research results can reach and be used by the audiences who can benefit most from them. The PGR should refer to the [Communicating your Research Toolkit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1W0rYuQ-x9PbTLX7P8q3UaUx9B2_seeVk/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106108979181897803965&rtpof=true&sd=true) to find key tools and step-by-step guidance and get in contact with the DTP if they would like its support (rosalinda.quintieri@manchester.ac.uk).

**Further Information**

The CDA Application Form, Process and Guidance Notes and Nomination Form can be found at the following link: <http://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/partners/collaborative-phds/>

A list of NWCDTP Pathways can be found at the following link: <http://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/about/our-research-expertise/>