**AHRC NWCDTP Collaborative Doctoral Awards: Assessment Criteria 2024/25**

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

The application is 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. Projects should include details of supervisory arrangements. Applicants should bear in mind the EDI and Sustainability commitments of the NWCDTP.

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

* Clear evidence of the 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)
* Clear expression of how the project contributes to the partner’s strategic and research priorities
* Outline of the material contribution from the partner to the project, if appropriate and possible. Partners are not obliged to offer financial support but the application should explain what kind of in-kind contribution they will might offer
* Meaningful knowledge exchange
* Experience of the partner supervisor
* Wider social and community impact

**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 partner institution
* A record of previous collaboration between the supervisory team and the 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 project outline 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. The 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. |