

Cohort Development and Innovation Scheme (Student-led) Guidance



Applicants must read the Guidance as they complete the Cohort Development and Innovation Scheme Application. The NBCDTP Academic Directors may reject any application failing to follow this guidance.



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

Policy

The Cohort Development and Innovation Scheme (Student-led) funds innovative training programmes, events and activities. The AHRC Northern Bridge Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NBCDTP) Academic Directors will receive, evaluate, and prioritise innovative proposals for generic and specialised research training that emerge from the cohort of NBCDTP students.

Definitions

The lead applicant's "host institution" is the University at which the lead applicant is registered. The "local NBCDTP Administrator" is the administrator or equivalent based at the lead applicant's host institution, whose contact details are listed below. Their local NBCDTP Administrator is the first point of contact for award-holders.

The NBCDTP Academic Directors are members of academic staff appointed at each of the seven partner institutions of the Northern Bridge Consortium: Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sunderland, Teesside University and Ulster University.

Eligibility for Funding

Applications must be submitted to the NBCDTP Administrator at the lead applicant's host institution by the deadlines of 25th October, 25th January, 25th April or 25th June for consideration by all NBCDTP Academic Directors. Late applications will not be considered. Applications will be reviewed at the first Directors' Board meeting following each deadline, with results (or requests for amendments) sent to applicants as soon as possible thereafter.

The Scheme can only be used to support activities proposed by AHRC NBCDTP-funded doctoral students actively registered at their host institution.

Proposals must not duplicate either existing institutional or NBCDTP provision or activities organised by the NBCDTP in response to needs identified in the Training Needs Analysis.

Proposals must be aimed at students from all seven NBCDTP institutions as far as possible, though representation from all seven institutions at the event itself is not required.

The proposed expenditure must comply with AHRC regulations and the use of the Cohort Development Fund:

<https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/meeting-ukri-terms-and-conditions-for-funding/>

The Scheme can be used to cover the following costs:

- Travel, subsistence, accommodation and fees for external facilitators;

- Travel, accommodation and limited subsistence (in addition to venue catering) for NBCDTP award-holders;
- Hire, loan or purchase of essential consumables or technical facilitation costs, such as specialist technician fees, or specialist equipment, that cannot be provided by the host institution.
- Venue hire, and essential additional services such as the provision of Wi-Fi and AV equipment, not included in the cost of the hire, if these cannot be provided by the host institution;
- Venue catering;
- Hire, loan or purchase of essential training materials that cannot be provided by the host institution or venue hosting a proposed training activity if that also cannot be provided by the institution.

The Scheme **cannot** be used to cover:

- Internal staff (meaning **all** staff employed by an NBCDTP partner institution) costs or expenses;
- The cost of alcohol
- Training materials, training activities, or venues that may already be provided by or available at the institution or host venue, such as software licences.
- Conferences for research dissemination or other research dissemination activities without a clear training focus

Proposals for events to be run jointly with the Northern Ireland North East Doctoral Training Partnership (NINE DTP) are encouraged. Applicants should follow the general guidance in this document, and local NBCDTP administrators will liaise with their NINE DTP colleagues regarding the appropriate allocation of funding.

Proposals for events to run jointly with Schools or Departments at a NBCDTP institution are also welcome, but applicants are reminded that Northern Bridge award-holders must be given priority for places, and the NBCDTP will not fund activities that are part of the School's or Department's normal annual provision for postgraduate research students.

Applying for Funding

Applicants should bear in mind the obligations of the NBCDTP as a Doctoral **Training** Partnership. Proposed events with **no apparent training component** will not be considered by the NBCDTP Academic Directors.

Applications to the Scheme must have a named lead applicant, and will normally also have a supporting team of co-applicants representing at least three of the NBCDTP partner institutions. There is no limit to the number of co-applicants.

The lead applicant will be accountable to the NBCDTP for delivery of the activity and expenditure.

All sections of the application form must be completed, and the form must be typed. Incomplete and handwritten forms will be returned to the lead applicant without consideration. Electronic signatures are permitted.

Applicants are encouraged to seek supplementary sources of funding, such as travel bursaries, and must make clear what other sources and amounts of funding have been identified, if any.

Applicants must ensure that all costs proposed are reasonable and in line with the lead applicant's host institution's own Travel and Expenses Policy, and with the AHRC Training Funding Guide:

<https://www.ukri.org/publications/training-grant-funding-guide/>

All costs must be **fully itemised**, converted to sterling where applicable, and as accurate an estimate as possible based on current prices. You must evidence your estimates with, for example, a copy of screenshots or quotations from venues, identified accommodation, etc.

You should acknowledge the geographical spread of the consortium and factor in the costs of flights and accommodation for an estimated number of students travelling from the North East to Northern Ireland and vice versa. The potential increase in costs will not disadvantage the application.

You must ensure that all venues are accessible. EDI needs must be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of all training events and activities, including any networking or social activities included within them. Additional costs associated with accessibility needs can be factored into applications. Diversity of student cohort, organisers and any external facilitators or panel members should be considered at planning stage and post-activity evaluation.

Applicants are encouraged to seek advice on draft applications from their NBCDTP Academic Director and NBCDTP Administrator well ahead of the quarterly submission deadline they intend to submit for.

Applications must be submitted to the NBCDTP Administrator at the lead applicant's host institution by the deadlines of 25th October, 25th January, 25th April or 25th June for consideration by all NBCDTP Academic Directors. Late applications will not be considered. Applications will be reviewed at the first Directors' Board meeting following each deadline, with results (or requests for amendments) sent to applicants as soon as possible thereafter.

The application form and accompanying documents should be merged into one complete PDF document in the order stated on the application form and named using the following convention:

Award Holder Surname + Initial_Host Institution_CDI_Date DDMMYYYY
e.g. SmithJ_QUB_CDI_30062026

Failure to format the document correctly may result in a delay to its being considered or being returned to the lead applicant without consideration.

The application should be submitted from an institutional email account to the NBCDTP Administrator in the lead applicant's host institution.

Applicants may submit multiple applications to the Scheme. But in accordance with the AHRC's recommendation, priority will be given to students who have not previously received funding via the Scheme.

There is no maximum amount of funding that can be requested in a single application to the Scheme, but applicants should note that the Scheme fund is limited, and that limits may be introduced towards the end of the NBCDTP funding period.

Applicants must seek approval for any additional costs that arise during a funded CDF activity, (for example, opportunities not foreseen at the application stage, or resulting from an emergency) by making a request by email to their local NBCDTP Administrator at the earliest opportunity. Approval of such requests is not guaranteed. Claims for such additional costs that have not received prior approval by the NBCDTP will be rejected.

- **Proposed Venue and Rationale for Choice**

For reasons of health, safety and security, it is strongly recommended that activities take place at an NBCDTP institution, or in the local region of an NBCDTP institution. A strong rationale will be required for activities intended to take place off-campus, including an account of what actions will be taken to safeguard the health and safety of participants, and how EDI requirements will be met.

If it becomes necessary or is preferable (because of the availability of specialised equipment, for example), to host the activity off-campus, your local NBCDTP administrator should be alerted as soon as possible to make any arrangements necessary to make a payment to the venue.

- **Evidence of Demand**

Applicants must provide a case or evidence for demand for the activity. For example, an applicant may, via their local NBCDTP Administrator, contact the NBCDTP cohort to seek expressions of interest in the proposed event **prior** to making an application.

It is a requirement of the funding that at least 50 percent of attendees – based on the evidence for demand at the time of application - will be Northern Bridge award-holders.

Proposals for training activities should support training for a minimum of three students.

It is possible for funded activities to be opened to other AHRC-funded or the wider community of Arts and Humanities postgraduate research students within the consortium. Extending such events to non-AHRC-funded students is welcomed provided that NBCDTP award-holders have priority.

Practical Considerations:

It is strongly recommended that - due to various reasons, including but not limited to, the application turnaround time, the availability of space on university campuses, the availability of external training facilitators, etc - applicants submit applications for training events **at least six months in advance of the proposed activity**.

The involvement of the NBCDTP Administrator at the lead applicant's host institution will largely be intermediary and to ensure that the event is organised in line with the relevant University and NBCDTP policies. Depending on the nature of the event, it is generally anticipated that the applicants will take responsibility for liaising with facilitators and speakers, for producing publicising materials, for the production of course materials, scheduling, etc., where administrators will handle direct payments to venues, contributors, accommodation, catering, etc.; i.e. actions where an exchange of funds is required; and for contacting NBCDTP award-holders (and the wider community of postgraduate research students in the Arts and Humanities) on behalf of the organisers in order to help gauge demand, publicise the activity, seek feedback, etc.

In most cases, only active University vendors can be used for the provision of goods and services.

Due to stringent employment legislation, **under no circumstances** should applicants approach and engage third party service providers to help assist with activities without first requesting the advice of their local NBCDTP Administrator, and **prior** to the submission of an application to the Scheme. Applicants are not regarded as the employer of the service provider. Depending on individual institutional policy, such service providers may be regarded as temporary University employees; it may be necessary for them to undergo a Right to Work check **in person** at the host institution at their own cost – and they should be prepared to do

so before undertaking work; they may be required to have their employment status assessed by the host institution via an IR35 procedure; and institutions may refuse to engage any provider other than a listed University vendor. Failure to seek the appropriate advice well in advance of the proposed activity may mean that payment cannot be made to the provider, or they will be subject to deductions which are irrecoverable via the host institution.

You must also check with your local NBCDTP Administrator regarding the host institution's policy for External Speakers, if relevant. The lead applicant may be required to complete a Risk Assessment to assure the institution that the views of the speakers are not criminal, threatening, abusive, inciting hatred or drawing others into terrorism.

As a student-led initiative, a senior member of academic or professional services staff will **not** normally be present as a lead to monitor or support the running of the activity. Applicant organisers are reminded of the high degree of responsibility they assume in leading such activities; that they are ambassadors for both their institution and the NBCDTP, and therefore expected to conduct themselves professionally during the event.

Applicants can remind participants that they too should conduct themselves professionally and appropriately. Applicants should contact the Academic Director and local NBCDTP Administrator at the host institution either during, or as soon as possible after the event to report incidences of unsuitable behaviour, which may be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action by the relevant institution.

Allocation of Funds and the Source of Funding

The NBCDTP allocates the Scheme funds that are at its disposal via an open, transparent and equitable process, which is focused on meeting the needs and priorities of its award-holders. The Scheme is funded from the Cohort Development Fund (CDF), an additional sum provided to the NBCDTP by the AHRC to be used to support innovative training and development activities for the wider cohort of DTP-funded students.

There is no limit to the amount of funding that applicants can apply for each year, but the NBCDTP is obliged to select the most eligible applications for support, based upon the assessment criteria listed below, and its clear articulation in the Scheme application.

Assessing and Deciding Applications

Received applications are first checked by the local NBCDTP Administrator to ensure they are eligible for funding under the terms and conditions of the AHRC's Cohort Development Fund.

Applications are considered by all NBCDTP Academic Directors following the quarterly deadlines and are assessed against the following criteria:

Primary Criteria:

- The quality of the proposed training activity;
- Innovation in terms of content and/or format;
- A willingness to take risks;
- Likely value to the beneficiaries identified in the application;
- The potential to raise the profile of the NBCDTP;
- Value for money.

Secondary Criteria:

- The extent to which the proposal is interdisciplinary;
- The involvement of non-HE organisations.

Applicants may be asked to refine, revise and resubmit their applications and/or discuss their plans with the NBCDTP Academic Directors at a number of stages throughout the application assessment process. Applicants are **not** required to wait until the next quarterly deadline in order to submit revised applications.

It is anticipated that applications will be assessed **within four weeks of the respective deadline**. Applicants should bear these turnaround times in mind when applying for funding.

Dispersing, Accessing and Reimbursing Approved Funds

Where funds are approved, payment will take place by one or more of the following means (dependent upon the host institution's own procurement and expenses policies):

- a) The NBCDTP, usually the local NBCDTP administrator, will arrange payment of the item(s) and service(s) on the applicants' behalf, once negotiated by the applicants;
- b) The NBCDTP will transfer funds internally to the lead applicant's home Department/School to purchase on the lead applicant's behalf;
- c) In some cases, an applicant will purchase item(s) of small value and submit receipts to their local NBCDTP Administrator so that reimbursement may be arranged. Applicants must therefore be prepared to make an initial outlay. Expenses need to be claimed in a timely fashion and will only be reimbursed in line with host institution's regulations.

It is not normally possible to pay or reimburse more than the approved amount.

Funding is approved on condition that the applicants may not change any detail of an approved application for funding without prior approval by the NBCDTP. If the approved funding is no longer required, the lead applicant must inform their local NBCDTP Administrator. Any changes to an approved activity must be reported to NBCDTP Administrator at the lead applicant's host institution at the earliest opportunity but will not usually require the resubmission of an application.

Monitoring and Reporting

The lead applicant is responsible for providing their local NBCDTP administrator with a list of attendees prior to the event; and for providing a list of actual attendees following the event.

At the end of the event, the applicants are required to complete and submit an evaluation (maximum 500 words). These reports must be submitted to the NBCDTP Administrator at the lead applicant's host institution within one month of the activity taking place. Reports will be reviewed by the NBCDTP Academic Directors. The information provided by applicants in their reports may be used by the NBCDTP to publicise the Scheme externally and the NBCDTP's wider activities, and those applicants may also be invited to participate or present at future NBCDTP events and seminars.

Examples from previously successful applications:

- **Aims and Objectives**

"This workshop aims to provide basic digital illustration skills in Adobe Illustrator to postgraduate researchers from different disciplines through intensive training by an experienced Adobe trainer. The workshop will be specifically tailored to participants' needs. Participants will also learn about the use and value of digital illustrations within and beyond academia from an expert in Digital Humanities. Finally, participants will be able to put their newly learned skills into practice in a follow-up 'Strategic Partner Project' (SPP). Here,

participants will work in small teams designing a product commissioned by real life 'clients' (Northern Bridge's strategic partner institutions) who could use the end product in their exhibitions/displays. Thus, the course combines aspects of basic software training with public outreach and digital humanities skills."

"CPCS is a residential symposium designed to address the training needs of Creative Practice PhD students who write theses led by the production of creative work. It provides intensive, specialised sessions and opportunities to present research in an appropriate environment to an audience of peers."

- **Intended Beneficiaries (Including the skills to be gained by the lead applicant and co-applicants)**

"Participants will learn basic digital illustration skills in Adobe Illustrator. This will allow them to create informative images which convey complex ideas and concepts. These skills can be applied in their academic research (i.e. to illustrate their thesis and publications), but also beyond, for instance in communicating their research to a wider audience. Moreover, the SPP allows participants to gain valuable transferable organisational, planning, negotiation and communication skills. All of these can be applied directly in participants' research, and will be equally beneficial in their future careers, whether academic or not."

"The NBDTP consortium includes 24 Creative Practice students. Priority applications will be accepted from students in their 2nd, 3rd and final writing up years. 5 funded spaces will be allocated for non-NBDTP students with additional spaces calculated after initial NBDTP take-up confirmed. A maximum of 22 residential spaces are available consisting of 19 students and 3 facilitators. The symposium is informed by digital surveys and focus groups in the Creative Practice PGR group led by xxx, Research Fellow for Newcastle Institute for Creative Arts Practice (NICAP). CPCS draws from and contributes to xxx's research, strengthening the NBDTP and NICAP partnership. The Lead Applicant is a contributing member of the Creative Practice PGR group. Hosting and organising the symposium will feed back directly into this group, demonstrates her skills as an engaged practice-led ECR and boosts career prospects in academia post-completion."

- **Mode of Delivery**

"The workshop will consist of the following parts:

- *2x two days of computer-based training (one day beginners, one day intermediate) for 10 participants in each workshop in Adobe Illustrator delivered by Christine Storey (external facilitator) of Can Consultants.*
- *One evening lecture on how to convey difficult academic concepts in simple illustrations (Digital humanities specialist).*
- *The SPP: practical sessions in which teams of 4-5 participants design illustrated information panels (or a similar product) commissioned by NB strategic partners (Wordsworth Trust, Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM), BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art)."*

"CPCS includes sessions led by three experienced student-nominated facilitators. In a digital survey, 91% and above respondents opted for:

- *talks and specialised thesis workshops led by recent Doctors in each field,*
- *sessions to facilitate discussion on practice-led research.*
- *appropriate time and space for practitioners to present creative and critical components, and*
- *opportunities to give and receive in-depth peer feedback.*

Hosted at Hospitalfield, the innovative three-day symposium follows established models of professionally tutored residential training."

- **Innovation and Risk**

"The proposed course is unique as it offers specifically tailored digital illustration training at various levels to

individual postgraduate researchers. For newly trained participants to deliver a high quality product within a short time span to the client in the SPP is a risky and challenging, but equally highly instructive/informative undertaking.”

“The necessity to innovate this practice-led training event became apparent during the Thesis Bootcamp, led by and marketed toward students writing traditional 80k word theses. Creative Practice theses consist of a creative body of work and a 30k word critical component. CPCS is a low-risk project built upon advanced 'buy-in' from students through digital surveys and focus groups. 100% of Creative Practice PhD respondents agreed it was difficult to find professional training within their institution and their training needs require such a symposium to complete their theses.”

- **Profile-raising**

“This course raises Northern Bridge’s profile as it is the only tailored digital training course providing both intense training specifically tailored for academic postgraduate researchers and an opportunity to immediately put new skills in practice in a real-world case study. The products of the SPP, if displayed in partner institutions, will be credited to the Northern Bridge, thus raising its profile further.”

“This symposium will raise NBDTP's reputation for delivering globally relevant practice-led research by expediting the timely completion of participating students. It fosters future collaboration by bringing together a strategic network of creative-critical practitioners. CPSC dovetails with Lead Applicant's Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts (NCLA) student-led project 'Write Around the Toon' being relaunched in the 2017 academic year as 'Off-Site'. With NICAP support this takes the form of a module within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) training. Within the delivery of this training, the Lead Applicant will present and promote CPCS as an innovative NBDTP model in response to training need, promoting CPCS as an example of practical thesis training, collaborative discourse and creative showcasing to demonstrate the critical relevance of off-site research. Strengthening strategic partnerships and developing new ones, this presentation will also be delivered to current and prospective NBDTP partners, cultural venues across Newcastle-Gateshead with whom 'Off-Site' aims to host Practitioners in Residence. Continued use of Pop-Up banners here represent value for money in marketing a professional identity for Creative Practice within NBDTP.”

- **Publicity and Evaluation**

“The organisers have already gauged interest amongst the Northern Bridge cohort and recognised a significant interest in this course across different subjects. Before and after the event, the organisers will collect feedback via short questionnaires, which should allow this course and possible future ones to be tailored to participant’s needs even better.”

“An evaluative survey will capture key demographics and responses, including free text space for suggestions towards a future event. This will be distributed by email to all participants. Participants are encouraged to use social media to promote CPCS. We will collate these responses to boost Northern Bridge's profile, sharing on the social media account (co-run by the Lead Applicant) and elsewhere, as part of the delivery of 'Off-Site' in core HASS training and beyond.”

Further Information

The AHRC’s Guidelines for the use of funding, to be followed by Research Organisations is available at:
<https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/meeting-ukri-terms-and-conditions-for-funding/>

Local NBCDTP Administrator Contact Details:

Durham University	northernbridge.admin@durham.ac.uk
Newcastle University	northernbridge.admin@newcastle.ac.uk
Northumbria University	northernbridge.admin@northumbria.ac.uk
University of Sunderland	graduate.school@sunderland.ac.uk
Teesside University	research@tees.ac.uk
Queen's University Belfast	northernbridge.admin@qub.ac.uk
Ulster University	northernbridge.admin@ulster.ac.uk

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