

ESPRC DLA Postdoctoral Pathway Fellowship

Guidance for applicants and academic sponsors

2025/26

Timeline

Application closing date: 1st September 2025

Expected Interview period: w/c 15th September 2025

Start date: Between 1st October 2025 – 30th June 2026

Scheme overview

The EPSRC have renamed the previous EPSRC DTP Doctoral Prize Fellowships as DLA Postdoctoral Pathway Fellowships (DLA PPF).

Newcastle has 1 Fellowship available per academic year.

The first DLA PPF position will be available for entry from 1st October 2025. See timeline above for full details.

The Fellowship will include a 24-month fixed term academic salary based on Grade F, point 27, £35,116, plus a research project budget (to be calculated and requested as part of your application in discussion with your project sponsor) with the maximum budget of £15,000. Additional project funds can also be sought outside of the EPSRC DLA grant.

Candidates will be required to propose a novel research project in an area that fits within the EPSRC's funding remit <https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/epsrc-remit/>. As well as undertaking significant new work the fellowship aims to develop independent researchers with applicants encouraged to move into new areas of research and demonstrate the ability to work independently from their former PhD supervisor. This position also provides the opportunity to complete key publications resulting from the PhD, develop research networks, facilitate knowledge transfer, and deliver outreach activities. Candidates who have not carried out their PhD studies at Newcastle University are also encouraged to apply.

Applicants should identify an appropriate academic member of staff, referred to as a 'Project Sponsor.' They will be a Newcastle University employee, and you should approach them in advance of applying to discuss your planned research proposal. Your Project Sponsor must be willing to support your project and, where appropriate, host the project in their research facilities.

Recipients of the Fellowship will also have the option of an independent mentor who can offer advice and support regarding the mentee's research and career development throughout the duration of the award. Newcastle University is committed to providing support and development opportunities for all colleagues. We will also provide periodic review meetings with key colleagues, to discuss career development and will support you to apply for opportunities' post the fellowship.

Eligibility

To be eligible for an EPSRC DLA Postdoctoral Pathway Fellowship you must have received EPSRC funding during your PhD studies. This includes those recruited via the Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) and Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs). EPSRC funded candidates that are currently not based at Newcastle University are also welcome to apply.

To apply you must be in your final year of PhD and have either already submitted or be ready to submit your PhD thesis by the end of 2025. You must also secure the support of an academic sponsor based at Newcastle University, and a statement of support from the intended host School. This should be your first post-doctoral position, and you should not be more than 6 months post-PhD award.

Successful candidates must be ready to start the Fellowship between the 1st of October 2025 – June 2026. Concessions can be requested to start between July – September 2026 if the academic project sponsor is available over the summer break.

To commence your position on the above grade, you must have completed your viva and been admitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (i.e. received your final PhD qualification). If you wish to start prior to receiving notification of your final PhD outcome (e.g. Viva completed and minor corrections required) you will be required to start on a lower entry position (Grade F, point 24, £32,296) until you receive your final PhD award (pass list). This should be your first post-doctoral position, and you should not be more than 6 months post-PhD award.

Academic project sponsors: Please contact your School Research Director to seek approval from the School Executive Team that they agree to the proposed research project, you have the time required to line-manage the post-doc candidate, and you have secured access to the required research facilities. Please also include any additional financial resources that will be provided by the school that are not covered by the DLA fellowship award (not mandatory). This information should also be sent to the candidate and added to the research proposal document (see below). We also require a letter of support from the academic sponsor confirming they support the candidates' application and be included in their submitted application via the [e-recruitment system](#).

Application process

The applicant is required to provide the following documentation via the [Newcastle e-recruitment system](#):

- A brief academic CV including the names of 2 referees.
- Previous qualification certificates and transcripts
- Letter of support from academic project sponsor
- Complete and upload the research proposal proforma (See below)

Research proposal

Please visit the webpage to access the [Research proposal proforma](#) document and complete this using the guidance below. The sections required include:

- **Summary (500 words)**

Q. In plain English, provide a summary that we can use to assess your application.

Clearly describe your proposed work in terms of:

- context
- the challenge the project addresses
- aims and objectives
- potential applications and benefits

▪ ***Vision and Approach (1,000 words)***

Q. What are you hoping to achieve with and how will you deliver your proposed work?

You may include images, graphs, tables. You can have an additional page for a diagrammatic workplan.

Vision 300 words

What the assessors are looking for in your response

For the Vision, explain how your proposed work:

- is high quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)
- has the potential to advance current understanding, or generate new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area of its focus
- is timely given current trends, context and needs
- impacts world-leading research, society, the economy or the environment

Within the Vision section we also expect you to:

- identify the potential direct or indirect benefits and who the beneficiaries might be

Approach 700 words

For the Approach, explain how you have designed your work so that it:

- is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
- is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how you will manage them
- if applicable, uses a clearly written and transparent methodology
- if applicable, summarises the previous work and describes how this will be built on and progressed
- will translate outputs into outcomes and impacts

References may be included within this section.

▪ ***Applicant capability to deliver (1,000 words)***

Q. Why are you the right individual to successfully deliver the proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Evidence of how you have:

- the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to make best use of the benefits presented by this funding opportunity to develop your career
- the right balance of skills and aptitude to deliver the proposed work
- contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community

- the appropriate team working or leadership skills (appropriate to career stage)

Complete this section using the following R4RI module headings. You should use each heading once, see the [**UKRI guidance on R4RI**](#). You should consider how to balance your answer, and emphasise where appropriate the key skills you bring:

- contributions to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies, or knowledge
- the maintenance of effective working relationships
- contributions to the wider research and innovation community
- contributions to broader research or innovation, users and audiences, and towards wider societal benefit

You should complete this section as a narrative. Do not format it like a CV.

- ***Career development (500 words)***

Q. Why is this fellowship the right way to develop your career, and how will you use it to benefit others?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Ensure that you have identified:

- career development goals appropriate to the fellowship funding opportunity
- how the fellowship will provide a feasible and appropriate trajectory for your personal development and to achieve your stated career development goals (as appropriate to your career stage and field)
- how you will contribute to positive change in the wider research and innovation community, for example through Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), advocacy or advisory roles, stakeholder engagement, participation in peer review, influencing policy, public engagement, or outreach

Within the Career development section, we also expect you to describe:

- how the proposed work will provide a feasible and appropriate trajectory for you to acquire additional skills, like research, leadership, communication and management
- what mentoring arrangements are proposed and how they are appropriate to you

- ***Host School support***

Q. How will the host School support your fellowship? (750 words)

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Your project sponsor can help provide information for this section.

Provide a support statement including:

- who you have engaged with in your host School (Academic sponsors name and role)
- evidence detailing how the host School will support you, as appropriate for your career development and the vision and approach of the fellowship

- what financial or practical support, such as access to the appropriate services, facilities, infrastructure, or equipment, is being provided and how this strengthens your application
- how your research environment will contribute to the success of the work, in terms of suitability of the host School and strategic relevance to the project

- ***Resources and cost justification***

Q. What will you need to deliver your proposed work and how much will it cost? (1,000 words)

You can use a table to set out costs and the funding source (inc. in-kind, DLA research budget, external funding etc.)

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Justify the application's more costly resources, in particular:

- significant travel for field work or collaboration (but not regular travel between collaborating organisations or to conferences)
- any consumables beyond typical requirements, or that are required in exceptional quantities
- all facilities and infrastructure costs
- External training costs (outside of the University's Researcher development programme)

- ***Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)***

Q. What are the ethical or RRI implications and issues relating to the proposed work? (500 words)

If you do not think that the proposed work raises any ethical or RRI issues, explain why.

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Demonstrate that you have identified and evaluated:

- the relevant ethical or responsible research and innovation considerations
- how you will manage these considerations

If you are collecting or using data, you should identify:

- any legal and ethical considerations of collecting, releasing or storing the data (including consent, confidentiality, anonymisation, security and other ethical considerations and strategies to not preclude further re-use of data)
- formal information standards that your proposed work will comply with

Additional sub-questions (to be answered only if appropriate) relating to research involving:

- animals
- human participants
- genetically modified organisms

- ***Additional information***

Provide any further details relevant to your application. This section is optional and can be up to 100 words. You should not use it to describe additional skills, experiences, or outputs, but you can use it to describe any factors that provide context for the rest of your application (for example, details of career breaks if you wish to disclose them).

How we will review your application

Assessment criteria

- Vision of the project (/5)
- Approach to the project (/10)
- Applicant capability to deliver (/10)
- Career development plan (/5)
- Resources requested to do the project (/5)
- Evidence of host School and Sponsor support (/5)
- Ethical and responsible research and innovation considerations of the project (/5)

Assessment process

We will review your application using the following process:

Eligibility review

We will check:

- You have submitted the required documentation
- Your eligibility to apply as a UKRI funded PhD candidate. If you have not been funded by the ESRC your application will not progress.
- You are in your final year of your PhD and due to submit your thesis before the end of 2025.

Shortlisting

We will invite a panel of academic colleagues to review your application independently, against the specified criteria for this funding opportunity.

All candidates will be informed of an outcome within 2 weeks of the application deadline.

3 candidates will be invited to interview.

Interview

An academic panel will conduct online interviews with applicants. This will include a short presentation on your intended research project and a series of questions.

You will be provided with details of the interview, including format and date at least 2 weeks before the interview date.

Interview outcomes: Decisions will be communicated via telephone within 48-hours of the interview.

Feedback: Feedback will be provided to candidates following the shortlisting and interview process.