



# Doctoral Training Partnerships - 2021 competition

5-year allocation for studentships commencing September/October 2022  
(first 3 intake years guaranteed; final 2 intake years subject to a mid-term review)

## Guidance Notes

**Please read carefully before completing your application.**

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## 1 Competition Overview

**Full Application deadline: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 4pm**

**Interview Date: W/C 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**Announcement of awards: End of June 2021**

MRC's vision for the 2021 Doctoral Training Partnerships competition is to support high-quality doctoral training programmes that take a student-centred approach, focusing on scientific excellence, positive research culture and wider training opportunities.

Investments in doctoral training are a key component of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Medical Research Council's (MRC) overarching vision to develop research talent and skills. We know that outstanding research is made possible by investing in people: outstanding individuals and outstanding teams. We will ensure that research training and careers, in and across academia, industry and the health services, continue to attract and support the best people, fully reflecting the diversity of researchers in the UK and internationally.

MRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) provide funding for doctoral training across a broad research range relevant to MRC's remit, strategic research and skills priorities. DTPs also provide a breadth of professional development training opportunities to enhance the capabilities of doctoral candidates and develop a world-class, highly skilled workforce for the UK. MRC DTPs are awarded for multiple intake years of students and provide Research Organisations (ROs) with significant flexibility in the use of funds to support doctoral training aligned to the RO's scientific strategy and strengths.

To maximise the ability and flexibility to achieve MRC's vision, MRC funding for industrial Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering (iCASE) studentships will be embedded within the 2021 DTP competition, instead of awarding as a separate competition. Wider industrial collaborations are also encouraged as part of this call.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the original competition deadline was delayed from April 2020 (for student intake 2021 onwards) to January 2021, to support student intake 2022 onwards.

## 2 Eligibility

Whilst any RO may be a partner in a DTP application, only UK-based degree awarding ROs who have the infrastructure in place to deliver doctoral training may lead a submission. ROs not eligible to lead an MRC DTP bid, such as non-academic organisations, MRC Centres/Units, NIHR Biomedical research centres or international partners, can be named as Associate Partners.

An important feature of this competition is partnership: DTP applications across RO/institutions are strongly encouraged, where the partners' complementary strengths will enhance the training environment of the programme. There is no limit to the number of ROs which can be involved in a partnership, however, all partners need to demonstrate clear additional benefit, and ability to strengthen the training environment provided by the DTP. Partnerships which do not demonstrate added benefit or complementary strengths to the training programme are unlikely to be competitive.

To ensure that DTP applications have the capacity and infrastructure to support and deliver a cohort of MRC studentships for the duration of this DTP award, a "**Pre-application check**" was required for all potential DTP applicants who fell below a cumulative MRC-funding threshold of £20M. This pre-application check took place in February 2020 and outcomes have been communicated to applicants.

It is expected that ROs will normally be involved in only one DTP proposal; any RO considering partnership in more than one bid should **contact the MRC** to discuss further ahead of submitting an application ([Students@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:Students@mrc.ukri.org)).

### 3 Number of Awards and Funding Available

It is anticipated that up to 15 DTPs will be awarded, each supporting between 5 and 20 'notional' studentships per annum (set as the equivalent of a 4-year studentship). The total funding available is expected to support in the region of 155 'notional' studentships and 40 'notional' iCASE studentships per year, for three intake years (September/October 2022–2024). MRC may extend allocations by two intake years (September/October 2025–2026), following a light-touch mid-term review.

The funding provided for each four-year studentship will include £5,000 per annum research training support costs, £300 travel & conference allowance, as well as standard UKRI minimum doctoral stipend levels (plus London weighting where applicable) and fees. For iCASE studentships, a stipend supplement of £2,500 and £1,400 additional project costs per annum will be provided when the industrial partner is a Small and medium enterprise (SME). See Annex 5 for additional information.

Costs associated with delivery, coordination, and management (e.g. staff) of the DTP can be requested as part of an application but must be fully justified (see Annex 7). Costs associated with student supervision are not permitted.

DTPs will be awarded in the form of a single profiled Training Grant to the leading RO. The normal flexibility of Research Council Training Grants will apply, for example enabling DTP holders to:

- increase the student stipend above the UKRI-set minimum;
- part-fund awards, for example with funds leveraged from industry or other Research Councils (if at least 50% of the total cost of a studentship is funded by the MRC);
- 1+3 model of studentship funding;
- support high-cost PhD projects (for example, *in vivo* doctoral training).

The value of the final allocation will be determined by MRC's DTP panel, following evaluation against the criteria for assessment (see Section 5).

## 4 Expectations of DTP applications

All MRC DTP applications are **expected to meet a core set of expectations** (including a commitment to the Statement of Expectations for postgraduate training)<sup>1</sup>:

- A clear commitment from the RO to support and develop the DTP programme;
- A commitment to positive research culture and openly sharing best practice;
- Increase the diversity of individuals pursuing research careers;
- Open, merit-based and transparent recruitment of students;
- Excellent standards of supervision, management and mentoring;
- Transferable skills to form a fundamental part of doctoral training;
- Wider research skills and understanding (e.g. statistical analysis, ethics, reproducibility, experimental design, research integrity, policy implementation, public engagement);
- High-quality innovative training which supports all aspects of the students' development and career progression;
- Opportunity for students to widen their horizons, including exposure to industry and non-academic collaborations (e.g. partnerships and interactions with industry and the provision of collaborative training).

MRC DTP applications **should also provide evidence of** alignment to MRC's remit and Strategic Delivery Plan<sup>2</sup>, as appropriate to the strengths and experience of the proposed DTP programme.

We therefore welcome applications that help us to deliver on MRC's priorities and ambitions:

- Build high-quality capacity in existing and emerging priority areas, including precision medicine, experimental medicine, diagnostic and data analytics;
- Whole organism physiology (including *in vivo* training and systems biology) to enable progress towards a cross-level approach to medical research in human health;
- Data science at the interface of human health and biology (including modelling, data analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning);
- Translational skills and impact (clinical pharmacology, advanced therapeutics and translational medicine);
- Global health research to address health inequalities, particularly those arising in developing countries;
- Interdisciplinary skills and ways of working;
- Enable researcher mobility between sectors, supporting talented people to move between different parts of the research and innovation ecosystem (e.g. bridging the gap between health, physical and social sciences both in terms of training and background).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/skills/statementofexpectation-revisedseptember2016v2-pdf/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/files/about/dps/mrc-dp-2019/>

## 5 Criteria for assessment

ROs will be expected to demonstrate full commitment to the Partnerships in which they are involved. MRC reserves the right to terminate any Partnership performing poorly. Partnerships applying to this call must demonstrate how their proposal will address and meet the expectations of DTP applications, as noted in *Section 4*.

MRC DTP applications will be assessed competitively against **three** main criteria:

1. Research environment and scientific rationale of the DTP programme
2. Doctoral training environment and support
3. Management of DTP award and governance of partnership

The DTP Assessment Panel will consider the information provided by applicants and if applicable, MRC's current research grant and training grant portfolio including data from the Student Details section of Je-S. **ROs in receipt of current/previous MRC studentship funding are strongly advised to ensure that their Student Details returns on Je-S are complete and accurate.**

The assessment of proposals for MRC DTPs will include an interview of the leadership team (up to a maximum of 4 attendees) for shortlisted applications. Additional guidance will be provided to applicants ahead of the interview, which will be scheduled for W/C 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Award outcomes will be announced by the end of June 2021.

The following will be assessed as part of the three main criteria:

### 1. Research environment and scientific rationale of the DTP programme

- 1.1 Overall rationale of the proposed DTP programme and need for doctoral training in the specified area
- 1.2 Rationale and evidence for requesting iCASE studentships, if applicable (from information provided in the MRC DTP iCASE appendix)
- 1.3 Evidence as to why this DTP should exist and how the partners are complementary and well-equipped to deliver this programme
- 1.4 For those applications requesting iCASE studentships, evidence of previously successful industrial collaborations
- 1.5 DTP alignment with RO scientific strategy and strengths (research environment) including potential collaborations and partnerships
- 1.6 DTP alignment to MRC remit and strategic delivery plan
- 1.7 Evidence of previous success in doctoral training and scientific area
- 1.8 The DTP partner ROs are self-evaluating and progressive institutes who develop and refine approaches/processes based on feedback and experience
- 1.9 Current PhD student portfolio (including data provided as part of dashboard – see Annex 6):
  - Current PhD student numbers (MRC-funded students by type but also wider PhD population);
  - Completion and submission rates of PhD students at RO (including drop-out rates);
  - Student outputs.

### 2. Doctoral training environment and support

- 2.1 Alignment with MRC's doctoral training expectations
- 2.2 Demonstrate how the DTP will be student-centred/led
- 2.3 Training environment
  - Exemplar list of proposed supervisors available for the DTP strategic themes
  - Academic staff support and training (including what engagement and/or training is expected/required by the RO from supervisors, mentors etc.)
  - Benefits from wider training environment
  - Training proposed for DTP

- Additional opportunities available for students within and outside of RO (such as placements, internships, training, networking or other types of collaborations) and examples of previous opportunities utilised
- Interactions or engagement with other programmes/activities
- Commitment from DTP to provide a supportive and inclusive training environment and appropriate support systems in place to deliver this

#### **2.4 Professional development training and support**

- Training and support in place to provide professional development
- Career progression approaches
- Student support systems in place within DTP/ROs (including any learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Exposure and opportunities to collaborate or engagement with non-academic partners/environment

#### **2.5 Cohort building and networking**

- Details of how an effective cohort will be created and managed
- Examples of past/proposed cohort building activities
- Oversight of all MRC-funded students registered at RO (previous evidence/proposed actions)
- How the DTP will engage with other doctoral students (non-DTP funded students in the RO and other MRC-DTPs)

### **3 Management of DTP award and governance of partnership**

#### **3.1 Programme recruitment and assessment**

- Details of the recruitment process and how to ensure appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion
- Student monitoring and assessment processes in place within RO/DTP
- How DTP data will be managed and implemented for programme improvement

#### **3.2 Selection of supervisors and projects**

- Strategy and commitment to supporting and recruiting appropriate supervisors
- Approach to aligning projects to students
- For those applications applying for iCASE studentships, a demonstration of commitment from industrial partners and how potential supervisors will be identified (from information provided in the MRC DTP iCASE appendix)

#### **3.3 Governance structure**

- How the DTP will be managed in terms of funding allocation and administrative processes (including DTP reporting and data)
- Approach to ensuring an effective and productive partnership
- How good practice will be identified and shared
- Proposed oversight of non-DTP MRC-funded students (for example, those based at local or an affiliated MRC centre/unit/institute)

#### **3.4 RO commitment and financial implications**

- Commitment and investment from all partners
- Institutional support for DTP (in-kind or monetary) including administrative support, resource commitment and any match-funding proposed
- Any high-cost implications of the proposed DTP programme (see Annex 7)

### 3.5 Flexible supplement usage:

- Plans or processes to administer such funds to maximise student benefit
- Unique or novel proposed usage of the supplement (including transition support)
- Examples of previous use, if applicable

## 6 Submitting your application

All applications must be submitted through the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) system (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>). The deadline submitting applications is **4pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021**. Applications will not be accepted following this deadline.

- On entering Je-S, follow the menu selections illustrated in *Annex 1* to create your proposal
- A guide to completing the MRC DTP Je-S application form is provided in *Annex 2*
- A guide to completing the MRC DTP Case for Support is provided in *Annex 3*
- A guide to completing the MRC DTP Equality, Diversity and Inclusion appendix is provided in *Annex 4*
- A guide to completing the MRC DTP iCASE appendix is provided in *Annex 5*
- A guide to completing the MRC DTP Performance Dashboard is provided in *Annex 6*
- A guide to completing the MRC DTP Justification of Resources is provided in *Annex 7*
- Please note that a letter of support is required from every partner named on the application. If required, a single letter of support can be submitted signed by all partners, but it must clearly state and explain the contributions and commitments from all partners.

In addition to this information, ROs who have previously received MRC PhD studentship funding (either through the MRC DTP funding or other sources, e.g. Industrial CASE studentships or Unit studentships) are **strongly advised to ensure that their submission to the Student Details section of Je-S are complete and accurate** by the competition deadline.

## 7 Contacts

If you have any queries regarding registration with Je-S, please contact the Je-S Help Desk:

- Email: [JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org)
- Telephone: 01793 44 4164
- Staffed Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm and Fridays 8.30am to 4.30pm (excluding Bank Holidays and other holidays)

For all other queries, please contact the MRC studentships team: [students@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:students@mrc.ukri.org)



## ANNEX 1: Guide to create your Je-S Proposal Form

Please note that the call should be available from 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Supporting documents, such as the Case for Support, can be prepared in advance.

Please login to your Je-S account via <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Logout.aspx>.

- Select '**Documents**' from the left hand menu list from your Je-S account home page
- Select '**New Document**' from within the Functions/create section of your documents page
- Select Council: **MRC**
- Select Document Type: **Studentship Proposal**
- Select Scheme: **Doctoral Training Partnerships**
- Select Call/Type/Mode (optional): **Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP) Competition** (Please note that the call should be available from 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020)
- Select '**Create Document**' option

**Je-S Add New Document**

To find the council, document type and scheme combination for a particular call please use the call search.

**Call Search** (opens in a new window)

Select Council:  
MRC

Select Document Type:  
Studentship Proposal

Select Scheme:  
Doctoral Training Partnerships

Select Call/Type/Mode (optional):  
Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP)

Copy existing document?

Create Document Cancel



## ANNEX 2: Guide to Completing MRC DTP Je-S Application Form

The administrative lead Research Organisation (RO), named first in the Case for Support, should complete and submit the application through Je-S.

Application Form Tab	Guidance
<b>Research Organisation</b>	<p>Please name the lead <b>RO</b> - this RO will be the administrative lead of a successful DTP bid.</p> <p>Please provide the details of the “<b>Lead Department</b>” for the application.</p> <p><i>A single “Lead Department” must be identified within the Je-S application form. This is for administration purposes only and does not affect the submission of a collaborative multi-department proposal – participating departments should be indicated in the Case for Support.</i></p>
<b>Contact details</b>	<p><b>Primary Academic Lead</b></p> <p>Please name the primary academic lead for the MRC DTP (this should be the same individual as identified in the Case for Support, Section 1.3, and should be based at the lead RO)</p> <p><b>Primary Contact</b></p> <p>Where the Primary Academic Lead wishes to delegate responsibility for co-ordinating a DTP application, an additional primary contact can be identified.</p> <p><i>If there are any problems with the application, of if further clarification is needed on any aspect of it, this person will be the primary contact for resolving these issues.</i></p>
<b>Start Date</b>	Under ‘ <b>Call</b> ’ indicate the start date as 1 October 2022 and duration as 72 months.
<b>Overall Strategy Details – Success Criteria</b>	<p>Under ‘<b>Success Criteria</b>’, provide a succinct summary of the strategic case and unique selling points of your proposed research training programme.</p> <p><i>This summary should be considered as the brief ‘abstract’ for your proposal, with further detail provided in the Case for Support.</i></p>
<b>Grant Type</b>	Select ‘ <b>Grant Type</b> ’ option from the document menu list and then select the indicator adjacent to the ‘ <b>Doctoral Training</b> ’
<b>Attachments</b>	<p>Please attach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a single <b>MRC DTP Case for Support</b> (up to 10 pages, see <i>Annex 3</i>)</li> <li>• <b>MRC DTP Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Appendix</b> (up to 2 pages, see <i>Annex 4</i>)</li> <li>• if applicable, an <b>MRC DTP iCASE Appendix</b> (up to 2 pages, see <i>Annex 5</i>)</li> <li>• a single <b>DTP Performance Dashboard</b> (up to 3 pages, see <i>Annex 6</i>)</li> <li>• a single <b>Justification for Resources</b> (up to 2 pages, see <i>Annex 7</i>)</li> <li>• a <b>letter of support from every partner</b> named in the case for support (up to 2 pages) - this should detail the role/commitment/contribution of the partner, as noted in the Case for Support</li> <li>• if applicable (for those DTPs applying for MRC iCASE studentships), a <b>letter of support from each project partner</b> (mandatory) – this should confirm the role/commitment/contribution of the industrial partner, as detailed in the MRC DTP iCASE Appendix</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 3: Guide to Completing MRC DTP Case for Support

In addition to completing the information required within the electronic Je-S form (see Annex 2), your Case for Support should also be uploaded as part of your application.

Please consider the following requirements when preparing your Case for Support:

- To not exceed 10 x A4 sides (including any appendices)
- You must use Arial 11-point typeface
- You must leave margins of minimum 2cms on all edges
- You can upload only one case for support document
- Proposals containing appendices in addition to those requested will be rejected
- Ensure all pages of each document are numbered
- Set out your case under each of the headings specified below

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### Headings for your Case for Support include:

#### 1. Applicant Details

##### 1.1 Partner Research Organisation(s)

The lead (degree-awarding) Research Organisation (RO), who will be the administrative recipient of a successful DTP bid, should submit the application through Je-S and be listed first. All other partners should be subsequently listed, one per line. Participating departments should be noted in brackets after the RO name, if applicable. An RO may only submit one proposal as lead applicant.

##### 1.2 Associate Partner Research Organisation(s)

Associate Partners can be any organisations or departments that do not meet the criteria to be named as a Partner RO under 1.1. This includes non-academic organisations, MRC Centres/Units, NIHR Biomedical research centres or international partners. Associate Partners need to demonstrate clear additional benefit and an ability to strengthen the training environment provided by the DTP.

##### 1.3 Academic DTP lead (Name, Position, Organisation)

Please name the primary academic lead for MRC studentships across the DTP, including the name, position and contact details of this individual.

*This person will be MRC's primary contact on matters relating to the delivery and strategic direction of the MRC DTP.*

##### 1.4 Administrative DTP lead (Name, Position, Organisation)

Please name the primary contact for administration of MRC studentships across the DTP, including the name, position and contact details.

*This person will be MRC's primary contact on matters relating to administration of MRC DTP including completion and maintenance of the Student Details section on Je-S.*

##### 1.5 DTP Leadership Team

Detail the academic leadership team (which should include the academic lead identified in 1.3) who will be overseeing the DTP, including name, affiliation, position and contact details for each member. A brief description of the role each member of the leadership team will play should also be included. The leadership team will be interviewed as part of the assessment of the DTP bid (up to 4 members).

*For multi-institutional bids, the leadership team should include an academic lead per institution. Academic leads within each partner RO should be accessible to both students and the MRC and have responsibility for maintaining oversight across all MRC-studentships registered at the RO, whether DTP or non-DTP funded (e.g. CASE students, MRC Centre/Unit/Institute students, Clinical Research Training Fellows).*

## **2. Research environment and scientific rationale of the DTP programme**

### **2.1 Overview and rationale of proposed DTP**

Outline the programme to be supported for DTP funding, where applicable, including:

- Strategic themes of the proposed DTP and their alignment with DTP partner ROs' scientific strategy and strengths  
*MRC does not anticipate that DTPs will have more than 3 to 4 strategic themes. Themes may be related to specific health, disease or organ systems; research disciplines; exploiting a unique area of multidisciplinary or collaborative research; exploiting training experiences such as placements outside of academia. While the main strategic themes must be outlined, MRC accepts that ROs may wish to recruit outstanding students to an exceptional training opportunity that lies outside of a strategic theme.*
- The rationale of the proposed partners involved in the submission (including any Associate Partners) - if no partners are included, please also provide a rationale for not doing so
- Alignment with MRC remit and strategic delivery plan<sup>3</sup>
- An overview of the DTP programme structure and how this will support the strategy outlined above  
*Highlight the added value of students being funded via a DTP for this training programme, rather than other routes of PhD studentship funding.*

### **2.2 Unique selling points of proposed DTP**

- Highlight any "unique selling points" (maximum three) that are likely to distinguish your doctoral training strategy from that of other bids  
*Include any self-evaluation of current doctoral training provided in the proposed area or evidence of UK training gaps identified*
- Indicate the available capacity for MRC DTP studentship support – the number of DTP students you wish to apply for, including if there would be any scope for growth above this number if required  
*Justify the number of studentships that this DTP would have the capacity to support. Please note that the minimum cohort number for any MRC DTP would be 5 studentships per annum, with a maximum allocation of 20. Also include this number in the Justification for Resources.*
- Note any contribution to specific UK (and international) research skills needs, including niche strengths, alignment with MRC or UKRI strategy and/or shortage areas of expertise  
*Indicate the proportions of students supported by an award to be trained in any specified skill areas.*
- What successful outcomes do you expect in approximately three years' time, particularly in terms of the DTP's strategic aims/themes  
*Please provide a small number of key indicators that will showcase the success of your strategy for the proposed MRC DTP. Any indicators noted here may form part of the MRC DTP mid-term review.*

### **2.3 Previous doctoral training and impact**

Summarise previous experience of doctoral training (either MRC DTPs if applicable, or other non-MRC funded doctoral training programmes). Areas to cover include:

- For outputs that could not be captured in the performance dashboard, highlight any other achievements (e.g. student awards, prizes and other distinctions) from current/previous MRC DTP funding, or other non-MRC doctoral training programmes;
- Detail current and/or proposed RO destination monitoring processes;
- Highlight any wider impacts of this programme e.g. evidence of student-input to training, development of the governance of studentship funding, or improvements to wider student processes within the RO.

For those applications that currently have an MRC DTP award:

- highlight the impact of this programme to date, including progress made in addressing the research training themes and aims set out in your 2015 application;
- detail any key learnings from the previous MRC DTP programme.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/files/about/dps/mrc-dp-2019/>

### 3. **Doctoral training environment and support**

#### 3.1 MRC doctoral training expectations

All MRC DTPs should meet a core set of expectations set out by MRC (*Section 4*) and adopt a student-centred approach. Outline the measures that will be taken to meet these expectations and the approaches that will be embedded in the DTP to ensure the programme is student-centred, for example:

- Approaches taken to feedback/improvements across all levels
- Highlight any key changes that would be made based on student feedback/experience, from current/previous MRC DTPs or other doctoral training programmes

#### 3.2 Training Environment

- Outline the population of active biomedical researchers and potential supervisors who can provide training to students as part of this DTP, as aligned with the proposed DTP strategic themes/partner strengths

*In an appendix, provide details of an exemplar supervisor pool (up to 10), indicating which DTP Partner RO they are affiliated with and previous supervisory experience (including numbers of current and past PhD students, supervised and completed). [Maximum 1 A4 page]*

- Outline specific benefits of the training environment (staff, infrastructure, facilities etc.)

*Summarise the specific advanced research skills, methodologies and technologies accessible to students and highlight how these address strategic UK skills gaps. Highlight specific infrastructure that enables the DTP to provide in depth specialist training.*

- Academic staff support and training (including what engagement and/or training is provide/expected by the RO from supervisors, mentors etc.)
- Summarise any structured training programmes and taught courses that the DTP would offer/support *Include any detail about the approach that will be taken to provide wider research skills training such as budget management/awareness; policy implementations; public engagement; developing new technologies; research reproducibility and ethics. Indicate in which year such training will take place or be offered, if appropriate.*
- Highlight any proposed opportunities that will be available for DTP students:
  - Placements or internships (other ROs, industry, health services, policy bodies etc)
  - To collaborate or engage with non-academic partners or networks
  - Training or opportunity to network and interact between academia and industry
- Identify how complementary programmes/activities sponsored by other funders will be utilised to add value to the training environment

*Identify relevant strengths in multi / interdisciplinary training, including opportunities to align with programmes funded by the other Research Councils.*

#### 3.3 Professional development training and support

All MRC DTPs are expected to provide **personal development and skills** to further develop the student's knowledge and abilities towards support their career progression. Support for MRC PhDs should also be embedded within the DTP and adapted where required, demonstrating the student-centred approach of the programme. Include the following:

- Summarise the approach to providing personal development training and skills support according to stage of the 4-year programme;
- Describe how you will support students to make timely, informed career choices and manage their career progression;
- Detail what support systems will be in place within the DTP/RO for the students to access, including those relating to physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- Detail any learnings or developments that have arisen from supporting your current students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **3.4 Cohort building and networking**

- Outline how your Partnership will establish, integrate and manage cohorts of students

*Indicate the cohort building and / or networking opportunities that exist and / or are planned at the local level (i.e. home institution), at the level of the proposed DTP and any planned activities with other DTPs/Programmes. Detail how this programme will develop functioning student cohorts, rather than just individual studentships who are funded by the programme. If applicable, indicate how you will manage geographically dispersed members of the cohort.*

- Examples of any past cohort building activities (either MRC DTPs if applicable, or other non-MRC funded doctoral training programmes)
- Describe how the DTP will engage with non-DTP MRC-funded students registered for a degree at a Partner RO (e.g. CASE students, MRC Centre/Unit/Institute students, Clinical Research Training Fellows)  
*Provide any previous evidence of proposed actions of how non-DTP MRC students may benefit from the DTP, for example cohort building and networking activities.*
- Highlight any proposed engagement with other doctoral students (e.g. non-MRC students at the RO(s) or other MRC-DTPs)

## **4 Management of DTP award and governance of partnership**

### **4.1 Programme recruitment and assessment**

- Outline the DTP's strategy for recruitment of outstanding students, how you will ensure equality, diversity and inclusion in studentship recruitment
- How students are assessed, monitored and mentored throughout their studentship
- How the DTP will manage its student data and ensure that accurate and timely information is returned to MRC via the Student Details facility in Je-S
- How data will be utilised and implemented for programme improvement

### **4.2 Selection of supervisors and projects**

- Outline the DTP's strategy for selecting supervisors (new and experienced), including how you will ensure equality and diversity in supervisor selection. Provide evidence of how you develop, and performance manage supervisors
- The DTP's strategy for selecting MRC-funded PhD projects and for matching students to the most suitable project. Indicate how this process is student-centred/led

### **4.3 Governance Structure**

- A brief description of the organisational structure by which the proposed DTP training programme will be managed
- Your arrangements for allocating funding (studentships) from the training grant between DTP Partners based on the Research Training Strategy outlined above
- The support which will be provided by the Partners to ensure the effective administration and management of the Partnership
- How the DTP will ensure best practice is shared among the Partners and with other DTPs
- How the DTP will maintain oversight across all MRC-funded students registered for a degree at partner organisations (e.g. CASE students, MRC Centre/Unit/Institute students, Clinical Research Training Fellows)

#### 4.4 RO commitment and financial implications

*There is no specified or mandatory financial contribution expected from RO(s) as part of an MRC DTP application and the level of financial contribution will not impact the competitiveness of an application. However, clear commitment from the RO(s) to support and develop the DTP programme will need to be demonstrated.*

- DTP Partners' commitments and investments during the award (including any financial contributions) *All MRC studentships can be match funded (with 50% funding provided from a non-MRC source) – indicate the number of match funded students DTP Partners' will contribute. Also outline any other financial commitment by DTP Partners, which can include, for example, support for enhanced stipends or investment to provide enhanced supervision/facilities.*
- Institutional support for DTP (in-kind or monetary) including administrative support for the programme and resource commitment
- Note any particular high cost implications that this specific proposed DTP programme may have due to the proposed strategic themes, including justification for this  
*e.g. higher cost programmes due to focus on in vivo skills across all projects*

#### 4.5 Flexible supplements usage

Successful DTPs will be awarded a flexible supplement proportionate to the number of eligible PhD students to be utilised for a range of training opportunities (high-cost training; exceptional training opportunities; industrial or interdisciplinary opportunities; transitions from PhD to first post-PhD position). To date, these funds have been made available to all MRC-funded students registered for a degree at a partner organisation (e.g. CASE students, MRC Centre/Unit/Institute students, Clinical Research Training Fellows). Regarding the flexible supplement usage:

- Outline any plans/processes proposed to administer such funds to ensure maximum student benefit
- Specify any proposed usage/options for spending such funds on transition support (for any career direction)
- For applications who currently hold an MRC DTP award, include relevant case studies of exemplar uses of these funds to date

## **ANNEX 4: Guide to Completing MRC DTP Equality, Diversity and Inclusion appendix**

One of the long-term ambitions of MRC is to increase the diversity of individuals pursuing research careers. As forefront investments in doctoral training, MRC DTPs are expected to take a leading role in promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within their relevant areas. MRC DTPs are expected to demonstrate a commitment to providing a supportive and inclusive training environment.

All DTP applications should include a 2-page EDI strategy on how they would support MRC to achieve this ambition. The following areas could be included:

- Summary of current processes in place to promote EDI at DTP partner ROs;
- Highlight any proposed approaches, actions or plan by the DTP to further promote and improve EDI;
- An overview of the support systems in proposed or in-place to deliver this plan;
- Any considerations that will take place when recruiting positions relevant to the DTP (students, supervisors, staff etc);
- What indicators will be used to measure and monitor EDI of the proposed DTP;
- What considerations may need to be taken to ensure that all successful students will have the same training opportunities and career progression support (for example, those who require a flexible working pattern, have health-related requirement or cultural expectations);
- How to raise awareness and mitigate against unconscious bias in the management and governance of the DTP.

Please note that all successful DTPs will be required to report EDI data for each stage of the recruitment process for MRC DTP candidates in the annual monitoring activity. Any processes noted as part of this EDI plan may also form part of the annual DTP monitoring and/or mid-term review.



## **ANNEX 5: Guide to Completing MRC DTP iCASE appendix**

Industrial collaborations and experience of working with industry is imperative to MRC's strategy to support a highly skilled research base and encourage mobility between sectors. We are committed to funding outstanding individuals to perform ground-breaking research, regardless of their career sector.

As part of the MRC 2021 DTP competition, MRC's iCASE awards will be embedded within this competition, instead of awarding separately. For DTP applications who wish to request iCASE studentships, an additional 2-page appendix should be submitted as part of the application. Non-academic partners should adhere to MRC's current guidelines.

As a measure of its interest and commitment, the non-academic/company partner must make a specific, identifiable contribution to the research training and support of the student. Partners for iCASE studentships are expected to provide:

- an annual cash contribution to the academic partner towards the cost of the project of at least £1,400 per year, for the remainder of the studentship
- a mandatory cash payment of at least £2,500 per year as a supplement to the stipend, for the remainder of the studentship
- a cumulative period of no less than three months spent working in the facilities of the industrial collaborator. This 3-month period can be at any point during the studentship and may consist of a number of shorter visits if appropriate
- the company's costs while the student is working at the premises of the company
- all additional expenses, such as the cost of travel and accommodation incurred by the student as a direct result of attendance at the premises of the cooperating body.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are exempt from making cash contributions to stipends and project costs, these costs will be met by the MRC. SMEs are companies that meet the definition included in Recommendation 1996/280/EC of a small to medium size enterprise (SME) i.e.

- The enterprise must have a staff headcount of <250
- The enterprise must have a turnover not exceeding €50m AND/OR a balance sheet total not exceeding €43m

In addition to the evidence provided against the three main criteria for MRC DTP applications, the following information should be included in the iCASE appendix (if applicable):

- Capacity for iCASE studentships (number of studentships being requested per annum);
- Proposed projects and potential partnerships for iCASE studentships (including an indication of size of partner [e.g. an SME] and area of relevant expertise);
- Justification for collaboration studentships in this space/with this partner;
- Examples of past industrial collaborations/partnerships;
- Commitment from proposed collaborations and exemplar list of potential industrial supervisors;
- Proposed developments to future collaborations and industrial engagement.

## ANNEX 6: Guide to Completing DTP Performance Dashboard

As part of an MRC DTP application, a 3-page (A4) performance dashboard should be submitted providing data relating to doctoral students at the DTP partner ROs from a 3-year period. This can either be 2016/17 through to 2018/19 (as per original DTP guidance pre-COVID-19 delay) or 2017/18 through to 2019/20. Please ensure that data are appropriately labelled to demonstrate which timeframe they relate to. Where possible, MRC's interest is in data related to MRC students. However, where ROs collect data as a whole population, it is acceptable to provide the most relevant overall population data available. The information provided must clearly distinguish between MRC versus overall student population data and should indicate at which partner RO students were registered.

### Performance Highlights

Use brief, numbered or bullet-pointed paragraphs to highlight any additional performance data that could not be demonstrated in the dashboard. The kinds of achievements to highlight are:

- The DTP partners' previous contribution to specific vulnerable or otherwise strategically important research skill needs;
- Career trajectories / destinations – Examples of up to 5 PhD graduates who have gone to highly competitive, prestigious post-PhD positions (for a range of career directions).

*Please note the achievements selected as examples for the above should be tailored to reflect DTP partners particular strengths and unique attributes.*

### Dashboard

Present the following summary performance data as a visual "dashboard". The aim of the dashboard is to provide headline information in an easily assimilated, reasonably standardised format. Where necessary, adapt the variables suggested in the table below to better convey your research organisation's performance.

Measure	Suggested Variables	Suggested Format
<b>Portfolio Management</b>		
Current MRC student numbers & diversity of funding sources (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MRC Doctoral Training Partnership Students</li> <li>• MRC Industrial CASE Students</li> <li>• MRC centre/unit/institute<sup>4</sup> Studentships</li> <li>• MRC Clinical Research Training Fellowships<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	Pie chart
Alignment with RO scientific strategy & strengths	Numbers of students associated with ROs strategic themes (as outlined in <i>Section 2.1 of the Case for Support</i> )	Histogram
Provision of scarce strategic skills	Number of students, where a major component of their work is aligned with MRC's strategic skills priorities <sup>6</sup> . <i>Where a studentship provides training in more than 1 priority area the studentship can be counted under each, as long as both priority areas make up a major component of their work.</i>	Histogram
<b>Recruitment, excellence and diversity</b>		
Diversity of recruited candidates	Summary of anonymised personal characteristics of doctoral students (including candidate applications and appointed students), where possible. <i>Include highest level of study to date (e.g. undergraduate/Masters), sex, age group, disability status and ethnicity where possible.</i>	Histogram -. Nos. & %

<sup>4</sup> Where MRC Institute students are registered with the research organisation

<sup>5</sup> Where registered for PhD training with the research organisation

<sup>6</sup> <https://mrc.ukri.org/documents/pdf/mrc-strategic-skill-priorities/>

<b>Student development</b>		
Student placements outside the RO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• &gt;1month industry, NHS or other workplace placements</li> <li>• &gt;1month academic placements</li> <li>• &gt;1-month placement outside the UK</li> </ul>	Table: Nos. & %
Generic and transferable training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of MRC students completing the RO's requirement for transferable skills training</li> <li>• A measure of student satisfaction with the training offered and received.</li> </ul>	Histogram
<b>Successful completion of doctorate</b>		
Completion and submission rates <sup>7</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of completed, ongoing and did not complete/withdrew</li> <li>• Time to submission: within 6 months of funded period, 6-12 months after funded period, more than 12 months after funded period, did not complete, withdrew (if data are included for 2017/18 through to 2019/20, please note the impact of COVID-19 on these data)</li> </ul>	Table and histogram
<b>Next Destinations</b>		
Destination - sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic (e.g. university based)</li> <li>• Private (profit making)</li> <li>• Charitable (non-profit making)</li> <li>• Health/health care (e.g. hospital based)</li> <li>• Other Research Council (e.g. research unit/institute/head office)</li> <li>• Other Public Sector (e.g. research agency/government)</li> <li>• Unknown</li> <li>• Not Applicable</li> <li>• Not employed/on career break/maternity/paternity leave</li> </ul>	Histogram - Total Nos. & %s
Destination – geography (Student population summary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside UK</li> <li>• Within UK (same organisation)</li> <li>• Within UK (moved to alternative organisation)</li> <li>• Other &amp; not known</li> </ul>	Histogram - Total Nos. & %s

<sup>7</sup> "Completion" means degree approved by the University. "Withdrew" means withdrew from PhD programme within probationary period

## **ANNEX 7: Guide to completing Justification of Resources attachment**

The Justification of Resources is a mandatory attachment to the application and should be no more than two sides of A4. It should detail the number of students requested by the DTP and cover any other additional costs required as part of the application (if applicable). This document will aid the panel in considering if the costs requested are appropriate and fully justified.

Costs associated with delivery, coordination, and management of the DTP can be requested as part of an application but must be fully justified. For example, applications may request additional costs from MRC to cover staff salaries related to core management or administrative positions within the DTP. Requests should be proportional to the complexity of the partnership or programme. Costs cannot be requested for supervision time or pooled/general staff. Evidence should be provided as to the additional value of these requests and justification as to why such support cannot be provided by the DTP partners.

This is a free text document, but we recommend that you use the proposed headings below (if applicable):

- **Student numbers**  
*The number of DTP students you wish to apply for, including if there would be any scope for growth above this number if required. Please note that the minimum cohort number for any MRC DTP would be 5 studentships per annum, with a maximum allocation of 20.*
- **Delivery, coordination and management costs**  
*Direct costs to cover staff salary (and overheads) at 80% FEC, for time associated with the MRC DTP will be permitted.*
- **High-cost training/projects**  
*If, due to the research nature or strategic priorities of the DTP, additional costs are required above the standard notional studentship award level [see section 3] these can be requested.*
- **Additional costs summary table**  
*The total additional costs being requested from MRC should be summarised in a table. Within this table, costs should be noted at both 100% and 80% FEC costs (which is the amount being requested from MRC) if applicable (e.g. staff costs). There will be no capacity to enter costs into the Je-S form therefore the 80% FEC should be calculated manually. Costs relating directly to standard or iCASE studentship requests do not need to be included in this table (as MRC will award studentships on a notional basis as detailed in Section 3).*