

ESRC Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme Call specification

Summary

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is pleased to announce a call for Postdoctoral Fellowships as part of the Global Challenges Research Fund ([GCRF](#)).

The Global Challenges Research Fund is a £1.5 billion funding stream to support cutting-edge research which addresses the problems faced by developing countries. GCRF forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, and will be awarded according to official [ODA guidelines](#). GCRF will address global challenges through disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, strengthen capability for research and innovation within both UK and developing countries, and will provide an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need. [Capacity development](#) is an important aspect of GCRF and this fellowships scheme aims to directly address this.

The ESRC GCRF Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme provides a career development opportunity for those at a relatively early stage of their academic career who can demonstrate great potential in social science research, with an international development focus. These awards form a key part of ESRC's strategy to achieve the aims of GCRF and to promote excellence in UK social science capacity-building.

Five Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs) have been invited to administer a one year ESRC GCRF Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme. These Doctoral Training Centres (South West, North West, Oxford, Bloomsbury, and Scottish DTCs) were chosen as partners due to their longstanding commitment to supporting postgraduate training with an international development focus, and due to demonstrable research strength in this area. This is a pilot scheme which will be reviewed next year, so changes may be made to the way the scheme is devolved in the future if it is continued.

Approximately £2.5 million has been allocated for the pilot and we expect to support **25** GCRF Postdoctoral Fellowships in the pilot year of this scheme. Funding is available for up to £125,000 (100 per cent full Economic Cost (fEC)) per fellowship. Fellowships will be supported at 80 per cent full Economic Cost (fEC).

Proposals should be submitted to the relevant DTC by **16.00 on 9 September 2016**.

Call details

The objective of this call is to enhance the capacity of early career researchers to engage with the GCRF, and we will fund approximately 25 GCRF Postdoctoral Fellowships in this first pilot year.

Fellows' actual programmes should reflect their prior knowledge and experience, but should include the following types of activity:

- Ensuring ODA compliance within proposed fellowship activities (see 'ODA Compliance' section on page 4)
- Engage with both academic and non-academic audiences to communicate the research findings that have come out of their previous doctoral work
- Build international networks with both academic and user audiences to develop impact opportunities and inform and support the further development of their research
- Collaborate with users through an internship or placement to help develop their professional and transferrable skills and understanding of users' organisations and their needs
- Produce publications in order to help establish a track record in their chosen specialisation and secure opportunities for long term employment in research
- Further improve their research and related skills through additional specialised training, e.g. language training, methodological skills, cultural awareness (such as socio-economic and political structures and cultural, historical and religious dynamics)
- Share learning gained through their fellowship with their DTC and the ESRC
- Carry out further limited research (no more than 25 per cent of time commitment) based on their PhD and related work through developing proposals for further funding. **NOTE: New unrelated research may not be undertaken during a GCRF Fellowship.**

Proposals are welcome from any disciplinary field, but the fellowship activities must be based at least 50 per cent within the social sciences. We encourage applicants to address the [thematic priorities](#) identified by ESRC, although applicants are not limited to these.

Duration of fellowships

The awards provide funding for **up to one year full time, or up to two years part time** to give fellows time to prepare for a successful research career. Part-time awards are for applicants whose normal working hours are part time and not for applicants who wish to hold the fellowship and continue other employment. Fellows must spend 100 per cent of their working time on the fellowship and cannot take any secondary paid employment during the course of the award.

A limited amount of teaching and other non-research activities will contribute to the professional development of the fellow and therefore award holders can set aside up to eight hours per week (pro rata) to other duties during the fellowship, including preparation time.

Eligibility

Applicants must have graduated with a PhD from one of the research organisations (ROs) which make up the North West DTC (Lancaster University, University of Liverpool or University of Manchester). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of the RO at which they are applying. Applicants who are not

established members must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research. Further details about eligibility of applicants can be found in the Research Funding Guide (www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg).

At the time of submission, applicants must either have a PhD or have passed their viva voce with only minor corrections. Any offer of an award will be conditional until the host RO has received documentary evidence of the completion of the doctorate with no more than minor corrections from the awarding RO.

The awards are restricted to those with **no more than three years** active postdoctoral experience at the start date of the award. Active postdoctoral experience is defined as that accomplished between the viva voce being passed and the proposed start date of the fellowship. This includes professional doctorates as well as the PhD. In calculating 'active' experience we will make allowance for periods where the applicant has interrupted their career for family, health or other personal reasons.

The scheme is **not open** to applicants who are established, permanent members of staff in an academic position with a research component.

This scheme welcomes proposals from those returning to research following a career break. Applicants are however required to meet the eligibility criteria of no more than three years 'active' postdoctoral experience.

ODA compliance

This call is funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund. GCRF forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, which is monitored by the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](http://www.oecd.org). ODA-funded activity focuses on outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth of countries on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list (www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm). Funding within this call will be awarded in a manner that fits with Official ODA guidelines (www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm).

To comply with ODA requirements, all proposals must make clear how their primary purpose is to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country or countries on the DAC list. Proposals may relate to any country or countries on the DAC list; there are no priority countries. Applicants must clearly demonstrate how they meet ODA requirements throughout their case for support. In addition, all proposals must include a mandatory attachment addressing the following questions:

- Which country/ countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal?
- How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
- How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?

General advice on ODA and links to other useful sources of information are provided on the ESRC website (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/international-research/global-challenges-research-fund-gcrf/official-development-assistance-oda/>).

The ESRC will check a subset of the fellowships to ensure applicant eligibility and ODA compliance. If any concerns are raised ESRC reserves the right to seek further information about an applicant from the awarding institution. In these circumstances any award which has already commenced may be withdrawn.

Funding including costs and staffing

All proposals will be subject to ESRC's funding rules as outlined in our Research Funding Guide. Proposals will need to show 100 per cent of full Economic Cost of the proposed research (fEC). The ESRC will meet 80 per cent fEC on proposals submitted.

Mentoring arrangements

All GCRF Fellows are required to have a mentor based at the research organisation where the fellowship is held. The mentor should have experience and a strong interest in the applicant's field of research but should not normally be the applicant's PhD supervisor. We expect the mentoring time required to be around one-two hours per week and will provide funding through the grant to enable this.

Stakeholder engagement and impact expectations

We expect fellows funded under the call to have identified the potential impacts of their research on policy and practice, and to actively consider how these can be maximised and developed. This emphasis on research impact will be reflected within the assessment process and will be taken into during the review process. We recommend that 10 per cent of the overall budget should be allocated for impact related activities.

When completing the 'Impact plan and user engagement' section of the application form, applicants may find it helpful to refer to [ESRC guidance on developing an impact strategy](#).

Collaboration, international skills development and overseas institutional visits

The ODA component of this call is concerned with focussing high quality research to address an issue of global importance. Underpinning the call and all funded Fellowships must be a strong research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices. Research must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities and societies where they will operate.

Collaboration with partners may build on existing relationships or represent the development of a new collaborative relationship. The intellectual challenge should be the determining factor when configuring appropriate partnerships and collaborations. The principal requirement is for meaningful quality collaborations or partnerships.

All GCRF Postdoctoral Fellows are encouraged to make an overseas institutional visit or series of visits during the course of their Fellowship to develop their international networks, engage with academic and non-academic audiences, and develop their skills to operate in an international context (eg language training and cultural awareness). Funding is available to support up to four months overseas within the period of the award. All travel must be subject to Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice. Applicants will need to demonstrate how these activities are integral to the planned programme of work during the Fellowship, as well as provide a full justification for the additional costs. Applicants will be required to provide letter(s) of support from overseas host institutions as part of the application process.

ESRC organised events

ESRC may organise specific events for those funded under GCRF, including GCRF Postdoctoral Fellows. Successful applicants will be encouraged to fully participate in such events. Successful applicants will also be encouraged to network with other GCRF Postdoctoral Fellows both within and beyond their DTC. Applicants should include costs of £500 to cover attendance at these events.

How to apply

All applicants must submit proposals on the provided application form along with required attachments by **16.00 on 9 September 2016** to nwdtc@liverpool.ac.uk

Each DTC will review the proposals and make funding decisions on behalf of ESRC. Successful applicants will be required to submit their proposal through the Research Council's Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>). See the proposal guidance notes for further details, which will be available on the ESRC website from October 2016.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Quality of the work programme
- Timetable and work plan
- Value for money
- Impact and outputs
- Consideration of ethical issues
- ODA compliance

Mandatory attachments

All attachments must be produced in a minimum of font size 11. The following nine attachments are mandatory and must be included with your application:

1. Case for support (maximum six sides of A4)

This should be structured to include the following headings:

- **Abstract/ summary of progress**

Applicants should provide either a summary or abstract of their in-progress or completed thesis. This should be no more than one page and should include its main claims to originality and excellence, methodology used and significant findings. Bear in mind that reviewers will be asked to evaluate **what you plan to do** with your award, based on your doctorate; therefore it is important that the bulk of your case focuses on what you plan to do, as well as what you did in the past as part of your doctorate.

- **Research-related achievements**

This section requires a well-structured summary of 'where you are now' in your training and personal development. This will help reviewers decide whether an applicant is at a stage in their career development where a fellowship will have an important and lasting impact on their ability to work as a professional academic.

- **Impacts of your research**

This section should describe the impacts your research has had or that you expect it to have. Impacts include the impact of completed research and any planned further limited research, the dissemination of its results and the building up of a publication track record, the development of the research field and the behaviour or understanding of users and policy makers. We are also interested in the impact the applicant's training to date has had on their skills development and on their prospects for a successful academic career.

2. Justification of resources (maximum two sides of A4)

This statement should be used to justify the resources required to undertake the research project.

- Explain why the indicated resources are needed, taking account of the nature and complexity of the research proposed. Note that it is not sufficient merely to list what is required.

- Break down of resources into the summary fund headings Directly Incurred, Directly Allocated and (where appropriate) Exceptions, as outlined in the application form. In addition, spend should be justified related to the following headings:

- Overseas institutional visits (including any potential fieldwork costs)
- Funding for networking
- Training costs
- Mobile equipment needs (i.e. laptop)
- Impact-related costs

- In some cases, such as investigator time, use of internal facilities and shared staff costs (all likely to be Directly Allocated costs), the basis of the costing need not be justified, but the need for the resources does need justification.

- Estates and indirect costs do not need to be justified.

3. CV (maximum two sides of A4)

The CV needs to provide the date the PhD viva voce was passed, or the scheduled date for the viva voce, brief details of education to date, any awards received for work or training, previous employment history, and any conference papers or publications.

4. List of publications

The list of publications should contain the bibliography for references cited in the proposal.

5. Head of department statement (maximum one side of A4)

The head of department at the host RO must complete a statement confirming the RO's support for the proposal. Host ROs must demonstrate their strong support for the proposal guaranteeing as a minimum that the named mentor will be available and that appropriate support facilities, including office space and appropriate computing facilities, will be made available to the fellow during the period of the award. In addition, the host RO will be expected to show they have a commitment to the support and promotion of early career researchers and lecturers.

The head of department statement should:

- confirm that the applicant would be accepted into the department for the purpose of undertaking the proposed programme of work;
- explain how the proposed programme of work would fit in with the department's wider research programme;
- confirm that the applicant would have access to the same training and development opportunities open to permanent members of academic staff at the institution
- confirm that the applicant's work and progress would be subject to the same monitoring and appraisal as those of other academic staff within the host RO.

6. Mentor statement and summary CV (maximum two sides of A4)

A combined mentor statement and CV must be included as an attachment to the proposal.

Fellows will be required to have a mentor throughout the period of the award and they should be identified at the time of applying. The mentor should ideally have research experience in the same field as the applicant but should not, wherever possible, be the PhD supervisor. The mentor will need to be a senior colleague within the host RO. The reviewers will emphasise the role of the mentor seriously and will look for strong evidence of support. Thus the mentor statement should demonstrate that the mentor:

- has considered the individual applicant's needs carefully and tailored their programme of support to their individual needs
- will ensure the fellow is kept properly active and focussed throughout the year
- will also keep the fellow's long-term career prospects clearly in mind.

7. Work plan (maximum two sides of A4)

In constructing the detailed work plan attachment, applicants should bear the following in mind:

Fellows are not expected to undertake new research during an award. However, limited additional research directly linked to the PhD can be undertaken. The work programme should provide the fellows with time to communicate the research findings arising from previous doctoral work, build international networks to develop impact and further develop research, collaborate with users, learn the skills of writing for publication, and further improve their research and related skills. However, fellows must not be funded from any other source during the lifetime of the award except for the activities detailed below.

We recognise that during the period of award a limited amount of teaching and other non-research activities could be beneficial to the professional development of the fellows. Award holders will therefore be permitted to put aside a maximum of eight hours per week (pro rata) to other duties. Other activities included in this provision include teaching, organising and running seminars to explore research topics and issues, or developing discussion networks based around the award holder's particular research interest. The details of any planned extra duties should be specified in the application. Applications must make clear how ODA compliance will be addressed within the work plan.

8. ODA compliance (maximum one side of A4)

See the 'ODA compliance' section above for guidance on how to complete and what should be addressed.

9. Referee statement (maximum one side of A4)

The applicant must provide one referee statement to contribute to the assessment process. The referee may be the PhD supervisor, however if the supervisor is the proposed mentor, the referee statement should be from a second academic.

Other attachments

If you are intending to visit an overseas institution within the period of the fellowship, a letter of support from the institution must be provided, supporting the visit in principle.

No other additional attachments will be accepted and your proposal may be returned or rejected if you include attachments that are not permitted under this call or if any of the mandatory attachments are missing.

Commissioning timetable

- Call announced – 5 July 2016
- Closing date for proposals – 9 September 2016
- Assessment of proposals – w/c 3 October 2016
- Applicants informed and successful proposals submitted in Je-S – w/c 10 October 2016
- Fellowships commence – as soon as possible but between 1 November 2016 to January 2017

Contacts

For queries related to the call, please contact the DTC to which you are applying.

North West Doctoral Training Centre

- Hayley Meloy
Email: nwdtc@liverpool.ac.uk
Telephone: 0151 794 1482

Applicants are able to seek advice regarding ODA compliance from ESRC prior to application:

- Henna Patel
Email: Henna.patel@esrc.ac.uk
Telephone: 01793 411914
- Josie McGregor
Email: Josie.mcgregor@esrc.ac.uk
Telephone: 01793 413011