



Call for Expressions of Interest

North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership Interdisciplinary Societal Challenge Theme Leads (0.2FTE – TO BE CONFIRMED AT STRATEGY BOARD MEETING)

Deadline: Tuesday 22 July 2025

We are looking for six highly motivated academics from the five ESRC NWSSDTP institutions (Keele University, University of Lancashire, University of Lancaster, University of Liverpool, University of Manchester) to lead the new Interdisciplinary Societal Challenge (ISC) Themes for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) [North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership](#) (NWSSDTP). These roles will work alongside the NWSSDTP Director (Dr Laura Radcliffe), NWSSDTP Deputy Director (Prof. Bethan Evans) and NWSSDTP Manager (Hayley Meloy) – all based at Liverpool – along with the wider [Academic Management](#) Committee.

The [NWSSDTP](#) was first established by the ESRC in 2011, recommissioned in 2016, and most recently recommissioned again in 2023, for five further cohorts of students 2024 – 2029. The NWSSDTP is [one of 15 such DTPs](#) in the UK, created by the ESRC to provide postgraduate training across the full spectrum of ESRC recognised social science disciplines. The NWSSDTP awards 60 postgraduate studentships and 4 postdoctoral fellowships per annum. The NWSSDTP has been led by the University of Liverpool since its inception and has assumed a pivotal role in shaping and influencing the PGR landscape in the UK.

As part of the most recent recommissioning, the NWSSDTP has committed to establishing 6 Interdisciplinary Societal Challenge Themes which aim to:

- Develop **networks** that connect researchers across disciplinary boundaries
- Provide a mechanism for interdisciplinary conceptual, general and specialist **training**
- Develop new training opportunities focused on **interdisciplinary working**
- Shape creative and dynamic **interdisciplinary initiatives**
- Facilitate access to professional and employability skills, equipping students for a diverse spectrum of future careers
- Encourage ESRC PGR cohorts to engage with existing **interdisciplinary activities**, centres, institutes at constituent universities
- **Facilitate internationalisation** through bringing together researchers working in different global contexts to address societal challenges that require global action
- Accelerate work **across research councils**.

The Theme Leads will each be responsible for the delivery of activities within one of the **six ISC Themes** (as well as collaborating on cross-theme opportunities):

1. Climate Change, Sustainability and Global Resilience: Toward Equitable Futures
2. Addressing Health, Wellbeing and Social Care Challenges
3. Digital Transformation: Advancements in Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence and Society.
4. Governance, Democracy and Equitable Futures: Revitalising Economies, Building Socially Just and Inclusive Organisations and Communities.
5. Cognitive, Social and Cultural Processes in Human Development and Learning.
6. Understanding Conflict, Violence and Global In/stability.

In the short term, ISC Theme Leads will be responsible for:

- Establishing a Theme Orientation Group, including a PGR champion and a theme contact from each of the five NWSSDTP universities, or an alternative democratic mechanism for decision-making about theme events that includes representatives from all institutions.
- Identifying key research centres and institutes at each of the five universities which facilitate interdisciplinary research relevant to their ISC theme.
- Work with the NWSSDTP Deputy Director and other ISC Theme Leads to plan initial training in interdisciplinary working for PGR students.
- Organise a launch event for their theme.
- Develop a theme webpage on the NWSSDTP website to act as resource hub.
- Establish theme communication strategy.

Mid- to long-term objectives will be to:

- Facilitate at least two events per theme per year, led by either academic staff or PGR students. These events may include:
 - Thematic focused events and training
 - Reflective workshops on the practicalities of interdisciplinary working (e.g. finding common language when working in interdisciplinary teams)
 - Interdisciplinary initiatives funded by the DTP but organised by NWSSDTP students.
- Seek collaboration with other research council investments across partner institutions to facilitate cross-research council events, and where appropriate with international research centres.
- Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the enduring relevance of each theme, evaluating contribution to interdisciplinary collaboration and measuring the impact of activities accomplished (prior to the ESRC mid-term review in 2026).

In addition, the ISC Theme Leads will be members of the NWSSDTP Training Employability and Knowledge Exchange (TEKE) Panel and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, each of which meet twice a year.

ISC Theme Leads must have a detailed understanding of and be committed to interdisciplinary working and postgraduate training in the social sciences. They must also demonstrate a strong alignment with [NWSSDTP's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion commitments](#). Candidates are expected to possess the experience required to sustain and develop NWSSDTP's interdisciplinary working. The successful candidate must be able to facilitate collaboration with colleagues across multiple disciplinary areas and all five institutions, to realise the potential and ensure the sustainability of the interdisciplinary challenge themes. ISC Theme Leads must be able to represent the NWSSDTP in a diplomatic, fair and consistent manner in interactions with a range of stakeholders.

Candidates are invited to send a one-page A4 expression of interest - detailing interest in the role, relevant professional experience and notable leadership qualities, together with a current CV, to the NWSSDTP Office at nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk. Candidates are asked to clearly identify the specific ISC Theme(s) that best align with their areas of expertise and are encouraged to identify more than one theme where possible. We will appoint the best candidate to each theme. Candidates must ensure this opportunity is discussed with their line manager before applying.

Queries about the role should be directed to NWSSDTP-Director@liverpool.ac.uk.