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2023 EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training: call for expressions of interest

Background

EPSRC CDTs are considered "***flagship programmes which support innovation, skills development and responsible leadership in research and industry.***"

The University of Bath has a successful track record of bidding for, and [hosting](#), EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs).

Current [EPSRC CDTs](#) train 50+ students in a range of research areas over 5 annual intakes, combining taught programmes with skills training, alongside excellent research. Often they have a strong industrial focus, although this is somewhat dependent on the research area. The final intake for students to CDTs under their current funding will be in October 2023.

What is known about the 2023 call?

More news on the CDT call process will be released by EPSRC in the Autumn, with the call itself likely to be released in early January. To date we have not received details on how the call will be managed, whether there will be an outline stage or not, but it seems likely that the process will be broadly similar to the 2018 call. Documentation related to this call can be found [here](#).

EPSRC have already stated three key aspects that will need to be demonstrated in a CDT bid:

1. The need for cohort training and not just a volume of PhDs
2. The need for EPSRC investment in the research area
3. The ability to leverage EPSRC investment, against for example industry co-funding

In addition, we have also informally heard that:

- There will be 1 call covering the next five-year period.
- EPSRC do not envisage applying a cap on universities. They do, however, expect Universities to submit a number that is 'reasonable'.
- Budget: Fewer CDTs will be funded in the 2022/ 23 round. While EPSRC's budget for this studentship support mechanism isn't forecast to change vastly from previous rounds, due to costs significantly increasing over the past five years, the amount they are able to fund will be less.
- New and existing CDTs will be treated the same.
- The call is likely to be 'open' – EPSRC do not plan to state research areas. Instead, they will use the broad 7 scientific themes in their upcoming **Delivery Plan (The Physical and Mathematical Sciences Powerhouse; Frontiers in Engineering and Technology; Digital Futures; Engineering Net Zero; AI, Digitalisation and Data – Driving Value and Security; Transforming Health and Healthcare; and Quantum Technologies)** to help inform decision

making. Note that the Delivery Plan is scheduled to launch in September 2022 and these overarching working titles could still be subject to change.

- Application process: likely to have a relatively short first stage e.g. Why a centre, why this topic, why is this needed etc. EPSRC then plan to undertake a robust sift process that will result in a manageable number of bids being invited through to full stage. It is hoped that this will reduce the burden both for universities and applicants.
- Targeted *cohort start date of October 2024*.
- EPSRC plan to look at the *geographic distribution* of CDTs (applicants will be required to cover the regional benefits etc). It is therefore important that colleagues consider regionality when developing their proposals.
- EPSRC are currently in touch with the other Research Councils to explore collaborative bids.
- A cross UKRI AI CDT will happen in parallel.

[What is the likelihood of success?](#)

The bidding process is likely to be competitive. It is anticipated that EPSRC will fund fewer centres in 2023 than in 2018 (~75).

In the previous round 50% of the successful bids were continuations of current centres, despite a significant reduction in overall number of centres funded in 2014. Of these continuations, 46% were into their third round of CDT support.

In 2018, from the total outline proposals received by EPSRC 58% were invited to submit a full application. From these 37.5% were funded. The overall national success rate, from outline to funded proposal, was 21%.

At Bath, the success rate was 85% for outline proposals, 33% for funded proposals and 29% overall.

Note: These figures do not include the linked UKRI CDT exercise in the remit of AI, which funded 16 new centres, including one hosted by the University of Bath.

[How are we preparing for the 2023 call?](#)

The University is preparing for bidding to the 2023 CDT call (including any related AI CDT call) and has created a **steering group** to oversee the selection and developing of bids. This group will also help with identifying research areas/ leaders and understanding the resource and management implications for the University.

This steering group is Chaired by the PVC-R, and its memberships includes: the Associate Deans for Research (ADRs) of the Faculties of Science and Engineering & Design, the Associate PVC-R, the Director of Research Infrastructure and Facilities, the Head of Research Development, the Head of Pre-Award, the University CDT Lead, representation from the Doctoral College and the Project Manager (University Research).

[How many bids does the University expect to support?](#)

We would anticipate supporting around 6-8 bids as lead (depending on any demand management rules issued by EPSRC) and will consider partnering bids on a case-by-case basis.

Who can apply?

EoI are being invited from teams planning to lead a CDT, from those planning to partner with (an)other Institution(s) or leading a current CDT if they wish to re-bid for further funding.

Anyone considering bidding for a CDT should seek informal feedback from their ADR before submitting an EoI, thus providing an opportunity for early feedback.

What about CDT bids led by other Institutions?

As well as planned Bath-led bids, it is essential to know of any proposed bid that has Bath as a partner but is led by another university as these will also impact on the University strategy and position.

How do I submit an Expression of Interest (EoI)?

Anyone considering bidding for a CDT should seek informal feedback from their ADR before submitting an EoI, thus providing an opportunity for early feedback.

EoIs are invited both from existing CDTs (who can choose to change their focus) and new proposals for CDTs. The EoIs, following the format below, must be submitted to the [Research Development Team](#) in RIS by 5pm on Monday 12th September 2022.

What should the EoI contain?

In 2-pages, please outline the following aspects of your proposed CDT bid:

- Theme/working name of CDT
- Principal Investigator (PI) and Department
- Co-Investigators and Departments/Institutions
- Evidence of leadership experience and track record of the PI and primary academic team.
- Lead Institution: if not Bath please indicate whether the lead Institution has prioritised this bid
- Research area of the proposed, its importance and link to the University strategy
- Training need for a CDT in this research area instead of other routes to support doctoral studies and how have these been identified (e.g., consultation with industry partners)
- Links to existing CDT
- Broad outline of your proposed training programme. (Where will it be delivered and how?)
- Details of the size and composition of the proposed supervisor pool
- Any other relevant experience you have that you think would support a CDT bid?
- Details of potential academic, non-academic and/or industrial partners including details of potential contributions (cash/in kind, number of external studentships funded, etc
- Expected impacts on the sector(s) you'll be working with?
- Support required from the University and why?

What is the deadline?

All applications need to be submitted by 5pm on Monday, 12 September 2022 to
resdev@bath.ac.uk

I need more information

For informal discussions about potential EoI please liaise with your ADR in the first instance.

For any other queries please contact the [Research Development](mailto:resdev@bath.ac.uk) team in RIS.

Details of the 2018 call, including requirements, application process and assessment criteria can be found [here](#).

This page will be updated as more details surface.

Current EPSRC CDTs at the University of Bath

- [EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Advanced Automotive Propulsion Systems](#)
- [EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Aerosol Science](#)
- [EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Cyber Security](#)
- [EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Statistical Applied Mathematics](#)

Date of last update: 23 July 2022