

Changes to AHRC Support for Collaborative Doctoral Awards Frequently Asked Questions (September 2015)

Summary:

- Collaborative doctoral research is a key dimension of the postgraduate training supported by AHRC, and provides important and distinctive training opportunities to students, as well as benefits to collaborative partners and academia.
- As part of our ongoing support, we are looking to embed Collaborative Doctoral Awards in our Doctoral Training Partnerships and Centres for Doctoral Training. This will mean no longer running the stand-alone Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme after the current round.
- There will be no impact on current CDA awards or applications to the current round. There will also be no change to our Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme (which makes awards via major cultural institutions and consortia of non-university organisations).

FAQs

How is the CDA scheme changing?

The AHRC is going to embed Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs) in our major postgraduate funding schemes, the [Doctoral Training Partnerships](#) (DTPs) and [Centres for Doctoral Training](#) (CDTs). This means that the current round of the CDA scheme (which will award studentship funding for students starting in October 2016), will be the last, and our DTPs and CDTs will be asked to introduce CDA-type routes as part of their PhD recruitment and partnership work.

Why is AHRC making this change?

By introducing a CDA-type route within the DTPs and CDTs, the development and funding of AHRC funded collaborative doctoral projects can be embedded in mainstream PhD activities, rather than being seen as separate or distinct.

Following the introduction of the [Collaborative Doctoral Partnership](#) (CDP) scheme in 2013, it was envisaged that the open call Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) scheme would generate greater innovation and diversity in the proposals and the non-university partners involved. Unfortunately, the rounds in 2013/14 and 2014/15 did not attract sufficient high-quality proposals to enable AHRC to allocate all of the notional 45 studentship places available.

Award numbers have declined as a result: in 2013 we awarded 31 CDAs, in 2014 we awarded 21. We think that embedding CDA-type projects within DTP and CDT recruitment will better support the development of high-quality collaborative doctoral projects.

How does this change fit with AHRC's wider strategy for supporting collaborative research?

AHRC's DTPs and CDTs all have extensive partnership activity – e.g. drawing non-HEI partners into training activities, career events, as well as the provision of placement opportunities funded by the Student Development Fund. However, CDAs typically sit outside this activity. By moving to embed CDA-type studentships within DTPs and CDTs, a more flexible range of possibilities is opened up.

This will enable a DTP or CDT to enter into discussions with potential partners which cover a full range of options - from a PhD student undertaking a short placement with the partner to work on a specific small project, all the way through to a fully collaborative joint PhD project between an HEI and non-HEI partner.

I was planning to submit an application to a future round, what are my options?

If you were a prospective partner organisation, then you will want to talk to the University supervisor about the arrangements which a DTP or CDT has for developing collaborative PhD proposals - we will be asking DTPs and CDTs to develop guidance.

Equally, University supervisors who are developing relationships with non-university organisations will now want to be aware that collaborative PhD funding will in future be available through DTPs or CDTs.

I am a prospective PhD candidate who will be looking for funding - how does this change affect me?

There is no change in relation to studentship funding for PhDs starting in October 2016. AHRC PhD funding for start in October 2016 will be advertised in the normal way for both CDA awards and standard PhDs.

For PhDs starting in October 2017 there will be CDA studentships available with the CDP organisations, and all other AHRC PhD funding will be available via our [DTPs](#) and [CDTs](#).

I am an academic supervisor, and my university is not part of a DTP/CDT - what other routes are available to me now?

AHRC will continue to fund CDA awards via its Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) scheme, and the CDP organisations are keen to develop collaborations with a wide range of Universities. Details of the current CDP organisations are available [here](#).

I am an academic supervisor, and I am interested in developing a collaborative PhD project with a CDP partner - will this be affected?

The Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme will continue unaffected – the recent funding competition has made awards to CDP partners for recruitment of PhD students beginning in October 2016, 2017 and 2018.

I work for a partner organisation interested in collaborating with a university - how do the changes affect our options?

There are many ways in which a partner organisation can collaborate with a university through involvement in postgraduate research – from involvement in training events, or offering a short-placement for a specific project, or exploring the development of a fully collaborative PhD project. By moving to embed arrangements for collaborative PhDs in the partnership working of DTPs and CDTs, partner organisations can now discuss a full range of options for collaboration.

The change should also enable a more rapid development and funding of CDA-type projects. Currently CDA-type proposals have to be agreed with the HEI partner in time for submission to AHRC by the July CDA deadline. The period from then until the awards are announced early the following year is a waiting period, and only once the studentship is awarded can the recruitment process for a

student begin. With a process embedded in the DTPs and CDTs, potential collaborative projects can be promoted to potential PhD applicants as part of their recruitment process. Student applicants who are interested in research with the partner in question can then work with the organisation to submit a PhD application into the DTP / CDT's standard competitive process for the allocation of PhD funding. In other words, the timescale is shortened, and the partner more involved in finalising the plans in discussion with the student applicant and their academic supervisor.

How will AHRC seek to implement these changes?

We will be working with DTP and CDT Directors to advise them on introducing a CDA-type dimension to their recruitment from September 2016 – with a view to awarding CDA-type studentships within DTPs and CDTs from October 2017.

The current CDA competition (for applications received to the July 2015 deadline) will continue as normal, and make awards for CDAs starting in October 2016, but this will be the last round.

We will ask Directors of DTPs and CDTs to aim for at least 10% of their studentship awards from October 2017 to be CDA-type awards. Each DTP / CDT would be expected to review carefully its success against this target following each recruitment round, and inform AHRC of the measures to be put in place to address any short-fall. We do not, however, intend for DTPs /CDTs to ring-fence funding for CDA-type awards. The quality of applicants and proposals is paramount and applications for collaborative PhD projects will be considered in open competition in the normal way

AHRC September 2015