SWDTP Postdoctoral Fellowship
Competition process 2027

Exceptionally, this year the SWDTP have four 9-month ESRC postdoctoral fellowships to award. Additionally, we have to run the competition within a compressed timeline.

Timeline

10 Nov 2026	PDF competition launched on ESRC and SWDTP websites
1 Dec	SWDTP online information event Recording and slides to be posted to website
1 Dec '26 – 23 Feb '27	institutions run their internal sifts
23 Feb	**Hard deadline** for institutions to submit names of those successful at EoI stage to the hub
23 March 2027	**deadline for submitting full applications to the hub**
23 March – 2 April	eligibility checks.
5 April – 7 May	Assessment of applications
10-28 May	Selection of awardees
4 June	applicants notified of outcome
30 June 2027	**closing date for applicant submissions to TFS**

Guidelines for running the Expression of Interest (EoI) process

Disseminating the opportunity

As far as is possible within this year's contracted time frame, the opportunity should be disseminated to academic staff, early career researchers, final year and recently completed postgraduate researchers through your normal communication channels and to potential applicants from outside your institution through your website. This should include a contact point for information within your institution.

Seek advice swdtp-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk if it is not clear how to respond to a query. We would rather institutions collected questions from applicants and sent them to us in a single email.

Expression of interest competition

- The SWDTP has prepared an application form for the Expression of Interest stage and a set of scoring criteria. Partners may use the form and scoring criteria as is or adapt it.
- Applicants should be supported to find a suitable mentor. We discourage applications where the supervisor is a mentor and will not consider applications where the supervisor is the sole mentor.
- All applicants at EoI stage should be invited to complete the SWDTP's anonymous equal opportunity PDF data form. This is held confidentially and collected for statistical reporting to the ESRC only.

EoI selection panel

We expect that partners will create a panel of at least three assessors. We expect that the assessors will:

1. If feasible, include a mix of men and women. The panel should conform with your institution's EDI policy.
2. Collectively be competent to judge applications from across the full spectrum of the pathways hosted by your institution. (This does not necessarily mean that the panel includes representation from across all the pathways).
3. Provide successful EoI applicants with constructive feedback that will help the applicant in developing a competitive full application.
4. As far is feasible, provide unsuccessful EoI applicants with constructive feedback.

Deadline for sending nominations to swdtp-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk is 23 February 2027 but partners may send them earlier.

Number of nominations that can be put forward to the main competition depends on the number of pathways that an institution hosts.

Number of pathways	Partners this applies to	Number of nominations
14-17	Bath, Bristol, Exeter	4
6	Plymouth, UWE	2
3	Bath Spa, Bournemouth, Plymouth Marjon	1

If we find someone has been nominated by two of our institutions, they will be excluded from the competition and we will invite each institution to nominate an alternative within 48 hours.

Guidelines for supporting full applications

Applicants, including those from outside your institution, should have the same access to support and advice as any member of staff preparing a grant application.

Consider the following:

1. Applicants can only make an EoI application to **one** SWDTP institution. If we receive two nominations from the same applicant, they will be removed from the competition.
2. Applicants can only prepare a full application for one DTP. DTPs will share information and will make themselves ineligible if they apply to more than one DTP.
3. Has the applicant identified a SWDTP pathway hosted by your university? **This is a requirement.**
4. Is the application clearly over 50% social sciences (i.e. is it within the ESRC remit)? Is the mentor a social scientist? **This is a requirement.**
5. Is the applicant's viva date between 24 March 2026 and 23 March 2027? If it is earlier, will they have less than 12 months fte active postdoctoral experience (i.e. in research related roles)?

6. Are salary costs appropriate for an early career researcher, who has recently completed a PhD?
7. Does the applicant have a suitable mentor? Applicants should be supported to find a suitable mentor, if one is available. We discourage applications where the supervisor is a mentor and will not consider applications where the supervisor is the sole mentor.
8. Does the mentor have experience of being a Principal Investigator on a research grant?
9. This may be the first time that the applicant is bidding for competitive research funding. Ensure they are aware of support available to them, including support with preparing the budget.
10. We recommend, appointing two or more reviewers to give feedback on a draft.
11. Ensure the applicant is fully aware of any institutional approvals needed for the full application and deadlines for securing these.
12. Applicants preparing full applications can email swdtp-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk with queries regarding eligibility, choice of mentor or any other concerns that their institution is not able to answer.
13. If successful, will the applicant require a visa? Will they be eligible to apply for a visa given the duration of the fellowship will only be 9 months (fte)?

Deadline for submitting full applications to swdtp-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk is 11:59 pm on 23 March 2027.

Full stage applicants **should be invited to submit** SWDTP / ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships for 2027 Entry - EDI – Fill in form separately to the application to swdtp-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk. This is held confidentially and collected for statistical reporting to the ESRC only.

What happens next?

The SWDTP will invite academics from its potential supervisor database to act as assessors. Each application will be assessed by three independent assessors.

A panel made up of at least three SWDTP management board members will make the final selection.

Applicants should be notified off the decision by 4 June 2027 at the very latest.