SEDarc
The South East Doctoral Training Arc

Economic and Social Research Council

SEDarc Post-Doctoral Fellowships (PDF) competition

Applicant Guidance Notes 2027

The SEDarc Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) is delighted to announce that we have been awarded funding from the ESRC to host up to four Postdoctoral Fellows for the 2027-28 academic year.

The objective of this call is to provide support to those who are in the immediately postdoctoral stage of their career, to support them in consolidating their PhD, and preparing them for the next stage of their research careers. For the majority this is likely to be a research career in academia; however, those with a clearly articulated programme of activities to support their transition to a research career outside of academia (e.g. a researcher in public, private, or civil society organisations) will also be considered.

Fellows' actual programmes or proposed programmes of activities should reflect their prior knowledge and experience and be designed to support their longer-term research career aspirations.

Applicants should tailor their chosen activities to the aims of the fellowship and ensure they are relevant to their desired career intentions. Applicants must demonstrate a realistic and practicable programme of work in their proposal; proposals considered to be unrealistic or overambitious, particularly where too many activities are being proposed within the timeframe, are unlikely to be competitive.

The grants provide funding for **up to 9 months full-time, or up to 18 months part-time** to give fellows time to prepare for a successful career in research either within or beyond academia.

Fellows are expected to be embedded in the DTP: their Fellowship must be situated in one of our five interdisciplinary themes, and they are encouraged to participate in Research in Practice, skills training, and DTP events (e.g. summer conferences). Fellows must have a primary mentor (usually in their home University and associated with the thematic pathway of their research) and may also be given a second mentor from another discipline, SEDarc partner, or sector. We encourage Fellows with a wide range of career aspirations within and beyond the academy and can support the development of external stakeholder networks through our Research in Practice programme.

The funding opportunity will be open to applicants who:

- Have been awarded a PhD or have passed their viva voce with minor amendments by the application deadline of 23 March 2027 and have been awarded their PhD by the fellowship start date of 1 October 2027.
- Have no more than 12 months[1] of active postdoctoral experience. This is measured from the applicant's viva voce pass date to the application deadline of 23 March 2027.
- Are not a permanent member of staff in an academic position with a research component.

Further information and guidance from the ESRC on the postdoctoral fellowships scheme can be found here: https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/esrc-postdoctoral-fellowships/

Further information from the ESRC regarding early career researchers can be found here: Early career researchers – UKRI

[1] At full-time equivalent and allowing for career breaks

SEDarc Themes:

SEDarc has five thematic themes and each of the themes addresses core social science challenges arising in our region, nationally, and internationally. Postdoctoral Fellows will be asked to select the most appropriate theme, listed below, on their EOI form.

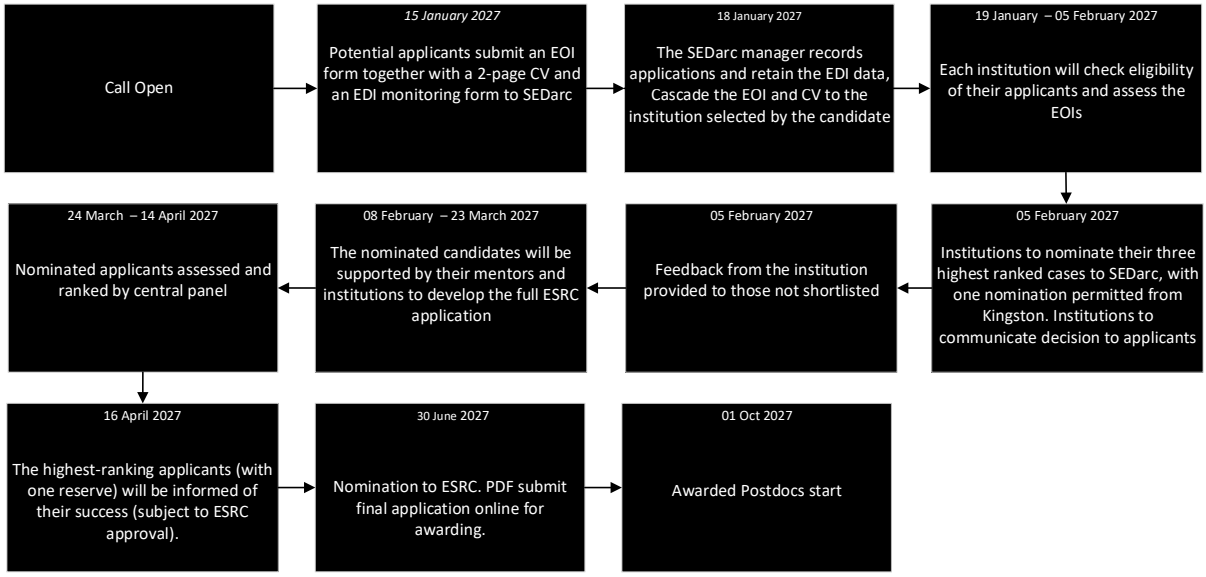
Theme	Exemplary Challenges
Living Sustainably	Climate change; Net Zero, green & circular economies; biodiversity & conservation; ecosystem services; energy, food & resource security; environmental risks, resilience & justice; environmental understanding, education & behaviour change; group norms; managing population movements linked to environmental change; conservation across age and cultures.
Healthy Thriving Communities	Health & social care; wellbeing; health inequalities; public policy, services & goods; poverty; equality, diversity & inclusion; place, identity & citizenship; voluntarism; transport & mobility; neighbourhood dynamics; housing & homelessness; families, childhood & youth; ageing; schools, education trajectories, & effective interventions; intergroup interactions; migration.
Inclusive Economic Growth	Mechanisms, regulatory frameworks & policies that promote inclusive growth; macro-economic (in)stability; taxation & fiscal policies; global, regional, place-based & demographic inequalities; education & skills; lifelong learning; labour market outcomes; fair work & pay gaps; sustainability & legitimacy of growth strategies; economic decision making.
Secure, Effective, & Trusted Institutions	Shifting geopolitical orders & the role of institutions; future international trade frameworks; operation, effect & legitimacy of democratic institutions; effective legal frameworks & systems for ensuring justice; human rights; forced displacement; modern slavery; peacebuilding & conflict resolution; diversifying leadership.
Transformative Technologies for Society	Societal shaping & outcomes of AI, robotics & VR / immersive media; socio-economic aspects of transformative technologies, including face recognition, computer vision & natural language processing; digital technologies in education, (mental) health, and justice; societal engagements with cybersecurity; fintech & livelihood strategies; technological change & future of work; digital divides and digital inclusion.

Eligible Disciplines:

Applicants must fit within one of the eligible disciplines within their chosen SEDarc institution. A full list of disciplines can be found below.

Discipline	Kent	Kingston	Reading	RHUL	Surrey	Sussex
Anthropology & Development Studies	X		X			X
Architecture, Built Environment, & Planning	X		X			
Business & Management (Inc. Hospitality, Leisure & Tourism)	X		X	X	X	X
Health and Social Care	X	X				
Cyber Security	X			X		
Economics (inc. Agri-Food Economics)			X	X	X	X
Education			X			X
Linguistics			X		X	X
Geography & Environmental Studies	X		X	X		X
Law & Criminology	X			X		X
Politics & International Relations (Inc Area Studies)	X		X	X	X	X
Psychology	X		X	X	X	X
Social Policy & Social Work	X					X
Sociology	X				X	X

Timetable



How to apply:

All applicants must upload an expression of interest (EOI) form together with a 2-page CV to PDF EOI 2026 by 23:59GMT on 15 January 2027. We encourage applicants to also complete the SEDarc Postdoctoral Fellowships equal opportunities monitoring questions. Please note that responses to the EDI questions will be anonymised and held securely for statistical reporting to the ESRC only.

To obtain a copy of the EOI form applicants will need to contact their chosen institution in the first instance:

University of Kent	kentgrc@kent.ac.uk
Kingston University	hssce-research@kingston.ac.uk
University of Reading	e.j.bailey@reading.ac.uk
Royal Holloway, University of London	esrcdtp@royalholloway.ac.uk
University of Surrey	doctoralcollege@surrey.ac.uk
University of Sussex	pgr-scholarships@sussex.ac.uk

Mentors:

Fellows will be required to have a mentor throughout the period of the grant, and they should be identified at the time of applying. The mentor should be a social scientist and have experience, and a strong interest, in the applicant's field of research but should ideally not be the PhD supervisor.

Fellows can have two mentors, one (the "primary" mentor) from their chosen institution and associated with the thematic pathway of their research, and a second mentor drawn from another SEDarc partner if needed. The primary mentor may be more closely involved in the work programme than the second mentor, and they will also be responsible for ensuring that the Fellow has the institutional support needed, and that any EDI requirements are met. The second mentor can be appointed prior to commencement of the fellowship. These second mentors will be identified through discussion with the SEDarc academic leads, and their suitability will be scrutinised by the SEDarc Deputy Director (Training).

Candidates will be encouraged to move to a different university and/or department to that of their PhD studies but we recognise that there may be situations where relocation is problematic due to EDI issues such as caring responsibilities, disability, finance, or other circumstances.