White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership

Training FAQs

The information below answers some of the most common questions, asked by social science doctoral researchers and their supervisors, in relation to the training offered by the WRDTP partner Universities.

1) What is the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership (WRDTP)?

It is a consortium of 7 universities, led by the University of Sheffield, which offers social science doctoral researchers a range of training opportunities linked to interdisciplinary themed Pathways, drawn from the thematic and methodological strengths of each HEI. The WRDTP also offers three/four year fully funded ESRC studentships across a range of different awards, e.g. Pathway Awards, Interdisciplinary Research Awards and AQM (Advanced Quantitative Methods) Awards.

2) Which Universities participate in the WRDTP?

The University of Sheffield, the University of Leeds, the University of York, Manchester Metropolitan University, Bradford University, University of Hull, and Sheffield Hallam University are members of the WRDTP.

3) Which social science departments participate in the WRDTP?

There is a list of accredited[1] departments in Annex I. To be eligible to join a Pathway you must be registered in one of these departments.

4) What does it mean for doctoral research students to be a member of the WRDTP?
   a) You can take part in all the events/conferences.
   b) You have access to research training opportunities beyond your own university and can work together with other social science researchers to identify collective training needs, which the WRDTP will look to commission.
   c) You can access additional funding to support your training (for eligible ESRC funded students), run your own training events, and set up new networks.

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[1] Accredited departments are those that have met certain minimum thresholds in research performance, as assessed by the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). The criteria for accreditation included the quality of the environment for undertaking research in the department, the track record for delivering excellence in postgraduate research supervision, the quality of research outputs, and evidence of research impact.

5) Training Pathways

a) What are Pathways?

Pathways are innovative interdisciplinary themed training routes. They enable students to articulate how their PhD contributes to wider societal challenges and to gain an advanced understanding of social science research. There is a list of Pathways and a brief summary of these Pathways in Annex II.

b) What do WRDTP Pathways mean to me?

Pathways offer you the opportunity to engage with researchers working in other universities, as well as in other disciplines, in order to gain a wider understanding of the scope and complexity of social science research in your thematic area. All ESRC-funded students are allocated to an appropriate training Pathway based on their funding arrangements. However, ALL students are invited to become members of a WRDTP Pathway and to participate in training activities that are aligned with their research needs. This will provide an important context for research training, including for Masters students via the Working Beyond Disciplines module and for PhD students via the Pathway element of their studies.

c) How do I decide what the best Pathway fit is for my research topic?

You will receive guidance on this from your department/supervisor. The best fit for you will be the Pathway that offers the most suitable help and guidance in supporting your research training and your research topic. All Pathways are multidisciplinary and include students from a range of different discipline-based departments and research centres.

d) How do I meet and network with other students on my Pathway?

There will be regular conferences and workshops for Pathways. Students on Pathways are encouraged and supported to organise their own events, including events that bring together different Pathways. In addition, each University has a local academic colleague who leads each Pathway – this may be the Pathway Director or Deputy Director – who can be contacted if you have queries or ideas about activities

you'd like to offer. You will be invited to 'sign-up' to a Pathway and will receive regular email updates on what events and training is on offer.

e) Can I attend training from more than one Pathway?

Normally the answer is yes, subject to availability. We will also be offering training events and activities that bring together students from different Pathways.

f) Can I move into another Pathway?

You can move to another Pathway within your first year of study to a different Pathway after consultation with your school/department/supervisor.

g) What is the relationship between my department/school and my Pathway?

All Pathways are multidisciplinary. You will have access to high quality disciplinary training and research supervision through your own institution, complemented by what the WRDTP can offer. The Pathways complement this by providing opportunities to engage with researchers working in other universities as well as in other disciplines.

h) How do I find out about WRDTP training and events?

The wrdtp.ac.uk web site will advertise all the events and training offered by the WRDTP and this is where you will book a place – see the TRAINING calendar. You will also receive direct email communications from your elected Pathway and your institution. Alerts will also go out on the @wrssdtp Twitter account.

i) Is there funding available for travel and how do I access this?

The WRDTP policy regarding the availability of travel bursaries will be advertised on the website (wrdtp.ac.uk).

6) Training

a) What does the WRDTP Training Experience look like?

You will undertake a Training Needs Analysis during your first month of registration in consultation with your supervisors, and this will be regularly reviewed throughout your

doctoral studies. The WRDTP offers Pathway, Advanced Training and Professional Skills training that will be tailored to your specific training needs and aspirations as a doctoral researcher. You will also receive training in your specific discipline area from your department/school. You are advised to discuss with your supervisor the local arrangements for recording your engagement with the training offered.

b) Will I be able to access training online?

The WRDTP will be recording training sessions where possible, live streaming sessions, offering webinars and hosting training materials, e.g. talks and presentations, on the Virtual Interdisciplinary Research Environment (VIRE) accessed via the wrdtp.ac.uk web site. You will be given access to the VIRE upon Pathway registration.

Masters Year Training Modules

Core research training is delivered through a Masters in Social Research framework at your home university which has been harmonised across the seven WRDTP partner universities. The structure will normally provide: a minimum of 75 credits of core social science research methods skills and transferable skills and a maximum of 45 credits of core subject-specific training. *Examples of the module content:*

Principles of Research Design: The content will focus on the principles of research strategy and design, reflexivity, and the impact of alternative ontologies and epistemologies on research design, methods, analysis and theory.	***Introduction to Quantitative Research and Introduction to Qualitative Research:*** These modules cover data collection, analysis and management.
Working Beyond Disciplines: This will introduce students to 'grand challenges' within the thematic fields of each Pathway, and will highlight the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to research.	***Further Quantitative Methods:*** This will cover those elements not already covered, such as 'high-level quantitative tools and techniques' for Economists and will showcase the advanced/innovative/'sophisticated' usage of methods.
Further Qualitative Methods: This will showcase the advanced/innovative/'sophisticated' usage of qualitative methods.	***Subject-based optional modules:*** This will extend core subject knowledge in the interdisciplinary thematic area appropriate to the PhD topic.
Professional Skills for Researchers: This is a 'portfolio' module, taught through short workshops throughout the year. It may include: bibliographic and computing skills; Ethics Training; Introduction to Impact; IPR and Open Access; Research Management; Communication Skills.	***Individual Research Project:*** This 'capstone' (Dissertation/Research Proposal) module is a self-contained project demonstrating skills of literature review, research design, and data analysis (and collection of primary data where appropriate) which will contextualise training within an individual research project.

Doctoral Training Modules

All ESRC-funded students (1+3 by progression, or +3 by entry) will normally be required to complete at least 60 credits of further training during their '+3' period of research. This is monitored for individual students via the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) process. There will be flexibility to spread this across the whole of the doctoral period, so that students are engaging with elements of training that directly relate to, and support, appropriate stages of their research and thesis development.

The 60 credits of doctoral level training will comprise four portfolio areas (compulsory for ESRC funded students):

Doctoral Training, Interdisciplinary Thematic Pathway: Cutting edge debates through WR-level seminar series; cohort-building through regular events throughout the year, comprising a mixture of Pathway-based research conferences, workshops, engagement events, reading groups, etc.	*Doctoral Training, Discipline:* Departmental-level cohort-building through discipline-specific workshops, reading groups, everyday research management and leadership.
Professional Skills for Research Leadership: This module develops the professional skills that are expected of independent researchers in the social sciences, enabling them to develop and articulate the skills required to make the transition from postgraduate research to post-doctoral research.	*Advanced Research Training:* The content will be drawn from a selection of advanced methods training courses. This module builds on Masters level social science research training through a focus on methodological innovation and high-level training (showcasing the work of methodological leaders and specialist workshops), and learning based around the use of methods in context (drawing on students' own projects-in-progress, and work of experienced researchers).

7) What is Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and why does it matter?

To ensure that all students (including 1+3 MA Social Research students) within the WRDTP receive a high level of social science training with a full complement of core, advanced, and transferable skills, Personal Development Planning will be used to allow you and your supervisors to tailor training within an appropriate framework. The Training Needs Analysis (TNA) framework at each partner university is used to do this and is based on the Researcher Development Framework developed by Vitae. Your TNA should be completed as soon as possible after your initial registration and it will be reviewed with your supervisory team twice a year for the rest of your doctoral journey. Your TNA will be used by the WRDTP as a means of evidencing that you have received the appropriate training in pursuit of becoming an effective social science researcher and will allow the WRDTP to tailor training to meet your ongoing needs. The TNAs will be independently reviewed by each of the WRDTP universities annually and reported into the WRDTP Training Group who will then assess the suitability of training on offer and commission additional courses where necessary.

8) Training and my supervisor

a) How does my supervisor support my training needs and development as a doctoral researcher?

As well as providing supervision for your research project, your supervisor, and wider thesis advisory group, are crucial in informing your Training Needs Analysis (TNA), in guiding you on appropriate training courses and activities, including Pathway membership, and in helping you to balance research and training.

9) Code of Practice

Your studies are governed by the regulations, codes, policies and procedures at the institution where you are registered and you are advised to familiarise yourself with these rules at the start of your studies.

10) Ethics

It is the responsibility of each doctoral researcher to take into account the ethical issues that apply to your research. You must ensure that ethical approval is sought at your institution following the rules set down there in regarding research practice.

If your specific question is not answered in this document please email
training@wrdtp.ac.uk

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Annex I – List of eligible departments

Manchester Metropolitan University
Department of Social Care and Social Work – *Education, Childhood, and Youth Pathway; Wellbeing, Health, and Communities Pathway*
Faculty of Education – *Education, Childhood, and Youth Pathway*

Sheffield Hallam University
Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research – *Cities, Environment, and Liveability Pathway; Wellbeing, Health, and Communities Pathway; Civil Society, Development, and Democracy Pathway*
Sheffield Institute of Education – *Education, Childhood, and Youth Pathway*

University of Bradford
Centre for Applied Dementia Studies, Faculty of Health Studies – *Wellbeing, Health and Communities Pathway*
Faculty of Health Studies – *Wellbeing, Health and Communities Pathway*
School of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences, Faculty of Life Sciences – *Wellbeing, Health and Communities Pathway*
School of Archaeological and Forensic Sciences, Faculty of Life Sciences – *Wellbeing, Health and Communities Pathway*
School of Management - *Wellbeing, Health and Communities Pathway; Sustainable Growth, Management, and Economic Productivity Pathway*

University of Hull
Department of History – *Cities, Environment, and Liveability Pathway*
Department of Psychology – *Education, Childhood, and Youth Pathway; Wellbeing, Health and Communities Pathway*
Geography/Geology – *Cities, Environment, and Liveability Pathway; Sustainable Growth, Management, and Economic Productivity Pathway; Civil Society, Development, and Democracy Pathway*

University of Leeds (**ALL** 7 Thematic Interdisciplinary Pathways)
Leeds University Business School
Institute for Transport Studies
School of Computing
School of Earth and Environment
School of Education
School of Geography
Institute of Health Sciences
School of Healthcare
School of History
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
School of Law
School of Media and Communications
School of Politics and International Studies
School of Psychology
School of Sociology and Social Policy

University of Sheffield (**ALL** 7 Thematic Interdisciplinary Pathways)
Department of Computer Science
Department of Economics
Department of Geography
Department of History
Department of Human Communication Sciences
Department of Journalism Studies
Department of Landscape
Department of Politics
Department of Psychology
Department of Sociological Studies
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Information School
Management School
School of Architecture
School of East Asian Studies
School of Education
School of Health and Related Research
School of Law

University of York (**ALL** 7 Thematic Interdisciplinary Pathways)
Department of Economics
Department of Education
Department of Health Sciences
Department of History
Department of Language and Linguistic Science
Department of Politics
Department of Psychology
Department of Social Policy and Social Work
Department of Sociology
Environment Department
Law School
Management School

Annex II - DTP Thematic Interdisciplinary Pathways

DTP Pathway	Discipline and Topic Coverage
Cities, Environment, and Liveability (CEL)	It is increasingly clear that we need to better understand interactions between humans and the environment to tackle environmental crises, including climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, deforestation and soil erosion. These interactions are shaped by institutional and geographical contexts, including urban and rural settings. Liveability provides a nexus by placing emphasis on infrastructures and their resilience (breadth of services, utilities, such as energy and water) and shifts within the built environment (spaces and places, mobilities, interaction, property, housing policy and practice). Liveability also highlights other important social dimensions such as inequalities and injustices relating to the impacts of environmental crises and/or of the policies and approaches that seek to tackle these challenges. The CEL pathway brings together colleagues and PGRs from a range of disciplines, including geography, urban planning, architecture, sociology, politics, environment, education and health to offer cutting edge training to equip the next generation of inter-disciplinary social scientists with the tools to respond to the grand social challenges of poverty, social exclusion, climate change and environmental degradation in urban and rural areas at local, national and international scales.
Security, Conflict, and Justice (SCJ)	Climate change, social deprivation, public health, gender and racial inequalities, global development challenges, distributive justice, violent extremism and terrorism, egregious human rights abuse, changing patterns of conflict, evolving markets in crime and techniques of crime control, (forced) migration, and the evolving security agenda –amongst many others– are challenges which arguably defy narrow disciplinary approaches. They are also defined by the shifting social, technological and normative contexts in which they are found, as well as the blurring distinctions between traditionally distinct academic categories. The Security, Conflict and Justice pathway engages with this broad range of societal challenges, addressed within and across criminology, international studies, law, political science, public policy and socio-legal studies. Debates about the nature and driving forces of conflict –and in particular the growing emphasis upon social and economic factors, identity, and environmental stresses– are relevant to the subject areas of development, governance and security. In turn, security and conflict are both inherently linked to debates about justice. Injustice is a source of conflict, and the question of 'just security' –including the politics and governance of crime and security within contemporary society– is highly topical and contested. Furthermore, injustice and insecurity are experienced by people in different ways on an everyday basis, including the challenges of social deprivation, unequal access to legal justice, the denial of minority rights, and deficiencies in the rule of law. The Security, Conflict and Justice pathway facilitates excellent research training that tracks and harnesses the latest theoretical advances, as well as the innovative methodologies that have emerged at this interdisciplinary nexus. Its remit supports research that directly addresses pressing policy challenges that must be approached with novel and

	wider perspectives to develop better strategies for conflict resolution and securing justice – whether locally, nationally or globally.
Education, Childhood, and Youth (ECY)	The focus of attention in the Education, Childhood and Youth (ECY) pathway is a range of societal challenges within and across the fields that include: Critical 'Race' and whiteness scholarship, Cultural Studies, Disability, Education, Language and Linguistics, Psychology and Sociology. These challenges include the realities and demands of learning (and teaching) for an unknown future, both nationally and globally; the ethics and changing nature of social justice in education; shifting notions of activism in civic society; inequalities in educational provision, access and attainment; wellbeing, and the cognitive and social-emotional development of learners. Pathway members have an interest in formal and informal learning and development across the lifespan: from perinatal, to babies and early childhood through to adulthood. As the world is rapidly changing and becoming increasingly precarious for many people, research in education, childhood and youth that draws on a range of disciplines is ever-more vital in the study of complex physical, social, political, economic and environmental issues. In this interdisciplinary pathway, we encourage and support a wide range of research topics, for example: • global and national critical education policy studies; • laboratory studies of cognitive and social-emotional development of learners; • the development and evaluation of educational interventions; • arts-based methods for engaging with communities; • the role of play in learning; • educational knowledge production; • practitioner research, including action research, exploratory practice, and reflective practice; • critical investigations into curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; and • professional development for practitioners negotiating competing priorities and uncertain futures. We also support and promote the use of innovative methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, to respond to key challenges in the field of education, childhood and youth, such as critical policy discourse analysis, visual and multimodal methodologies, digital teaching and learning, narrative inquiry, co-production (including learners and teachers as co-researchers) and experimental, quasi experimental and, feasibility studies, such as the neuroscience of learning and development.
Data, Communication, and New Technologies (DCT)	The Data, Communications and New Technologies (DCT) Pathway focuses on key contemporary challenges emerging at the intersection of technology and society. Our research investigates how social dynamics shape and are shaped by digital data and infrastructures, involving new models of engagement with societal issues. We are particularly interested in:

	The changing nature of the social, economic and political context of data and information production, dissemination and use, looking at core themes like metrics and algorithm bias and their shaping social practices and understandings of society; **The evolving relationship between digital platforms and corporate and state regulations**, in the context of projects investigating, for instance, platform governance, surveillance or censorship. **Everyday experiences and tinkering with digital platforms** through the Internet of things (IoT) like in social interactions, self-tracking activities or identity practices; **The relationship between technology and social change** in both the "Global North" and the "Global South". The above challenges require **interdisciplinary** approaches across information science, sociology, media and communication studies, journalism, linguistics, geography and science and technology studies. The pathway is particularly keen on supporting **methodological innovation**, offering advanced training in **digital methods** for social research, such as social media data mining, practice oriented digital hacking, visual methods and critical approaches to big data. It also provides expert training in **social media research ethics.**
Wellbeing, Health, and Communities (WHC)	This pathway addresses the grand challenges for health and wellbeing in communities including (but not limited to) inequalities in health for example, linked to race, income and social background, access to health care, healthy ageing and dementia, obesity, emergency care, mental health, patient safety and now living in a pandemic. The pathway uses multi-disciplinary perspectives to help understand how to tackle these grand challenges drawing on insights from sociologists, psychologists, health economists, the health professions, public health practitioners, social workers, health technologists and partnerships including local authorities, social care, the voluntary sector and the NHS. In addition, inclusion and resilience connections are made in this pathway between health, employment, employability, unemployment and work psychology. The partnership includes expertise in communities including (but not limited to) Black, Minority Ethnic and migrant groups, other marginalised groups, children, older people and those living with life-limiting conditions. Our methodological expertise includes qualitative and quantitative approaches, intervention development and evaluation, modelling and economic evaluation, and cost-effectiveness of health policy interventions.
Sustainable Growth, Management, and Economic Productivity (SMP)	The Sustainable Growth, Management, and Economic Productivity Pathway engages with several major areas of research that cut across many levels of society. These areas of interest include productivity and sustainable economic growth at multi-level scales, from firm, to sectoral, to regional, national and global levels; wages, finance, financialisation, skills and welfare; macro-level economics and other levels of micro-

	analysis to capture complex systems of management, regulation, and governance, including ethics, marketing, work and employment relations, accounting and finance, and public services; economic development, business support, and the sustainability of economic policies and interventions; sustainability of production and consumption practices and alternative models of business. Debates about the future of work and the role of consumption in society are central to the Pathway's interrogation of how we live now and sustainability acts as a fundamental link across the broad Pathway themes. Members of the Pathway team come from a range of academic disciplines including business, management, economics, geography, environment, marketing, and finance. The Pathway draws on this range of disciplines to offer interdisciplinary training in topics such as work, employment, productivity and the impact of new technology; sustainable urban, rural and regional development; research in finance; and historical methods in social research. In addition, the Pathway offers skills and development training through events such as regular writing days, how to publish, making research relevant to policy, applying for grants, and career development sessions, all related to SMP research. The Pathway also provides opportunities for members to present their own research at the White Rose Annual Conference.
Civil Society, Development, and Democracy (CDD)	The Civil Society, Development and Democracy (CDD) pathway seeks to comprehend the ways in which our systems and institutions of governance – in both the richer and poorer parts of the world – are evolving in a period marked by pronounced forms of contestation and crisis. We live in an era of fundamental structural change: from the global financial crisis of 2008 to the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond, and amid both a looming environmental emergency and the so-called fourth industrial revolution typified by automation and the rise of giant digital monopolies, existing ways of ordering the world, and thinking about it, are in pronounced flux, posing epochal challenges for development, democracy and citizenship. Within this kaleidoscopic picture, then, we seek to locate and better understand the nature of contemporary civil society: i.e. how individuals, families, communities and societies as a whole shape and are shaped by broad processes of power and global political change. This compels us to ask questions about the resilience of democracy, the extent to which particular forms of governance are legitimate, and how citizenship is exercised in different places in the modern world. In turn, these issues are fundamentally mediated by pronounced forms of inequality, both within and between societies; patterns of uneven development, as countries and regions experience contrasting patterns of growth and decay; and the kinds of policies and agendas that shape development policy at the national and global levels. In sum, this pathway offers excellent training for PhD students across the social science disciplines whose work relates, in some way or another, to how groups and communities navigate different structures of power through their systems of governance, and processes of development, in any part of the world.

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