



Sutherland Building at Northumbria University

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New funding to help train the next generation of social scientists.

A training partnership, including Northumbria University, has secured an investment of over £28m in funding to continue training the next generation of social scientists in Northeast England and Northern Ireland.

The partnership will use these funds to continue playing a leading role in the economic and social development of the two regions.

The Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Partnership ([NINE](#))

[DTP](#) is led by Durham University and brings together Northumbria, Newcastle, Sunderland, Teesside, Queen's Belfast and Ulster universities.

The funding includes £20m from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), together with £8.5 million in match funding from the partner universities.

As a result, over the next five years the NINE DTP, which was first established in 2017, will be able to offer around 55 PhD places per year in 18 subject-specific training pathways and interdisciplinary areas across the full breadth of social science research, across the seven institutions.

The new funding will allow additional study opportunities in three additional areas; criminology, policing and prisons; environment, climate and sustainability; and sport and society.

The partnership covers the full range of social science subjects and is home to research that explores challenging and societally important questions, with a strength in examining issues of regional importance to Northeast England and Northern Ireland.

Research examples include regional inequalities in educational provision, sexual violence within prisons, and the role of physical activity in the wellbeing of youth with disabilities.

From 2024, all students will be expected to complete a 12-week placement, and the length of a standard studentship is being increased from three years to three and a half years, enhancing financial support for research and creating new opportunities for students to put their research into practice beyond academia.

Dr Mick Hill, Associate Professor for Health and Social Research and Northumbria Academic Director for NINE DTP, said: "NINE DTP affords life changing opportunities to the brightest and best of our social science students – regardless of their social or economic backgrounds via an inclusive, world-class postgraduate research training programme in the social sciences. Recognised as an internationally leading consortium, NINE attracts social science students with the highest potential, who are then provided with the best facilities, financial support, and mentoring to allow them to

grow from postgraduate students to early career researchers and beyond.

“As a genuine research-intensive university, Northumbria will lead across the consortium on research-supervisor development – building upon and sharing our Graduate School’s recognised excellence in our own internal supervisor development initiatives.”

Speaking about the new funding, Durham University Professor Philip Steinberg, who directs NINE DTP, added: “NINE DTP is a collaborative and energetic partnership drawing on the collective skills and resources of seven universities to deliver outstanding training, supervision, and support to the next generation of social scientists, regardless of their social or economic backgrounds, via an inclusive, world-class postgraduate research training programme in the social sciences.

“This new funding will allow us to not only continue this work, but expand it into new areas of study, broadening our reach, bringing new expertise and research questions to the partnership, helping us prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century research environment.”

Announcing the ESRC funding, Stian Westlake, ESRC Executive Chair, said; “Our vision for postgraduate training is that it will develop globally competitive social science researchers who can operate in interdisciplinary, collaborative, and challenge-led environments across a range of sectors and who have a diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

“This redesigned and expanded doctoral training opportunity will enhance the experience for PhD students and boost the UK’s capability.”

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

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