

LISS DTP Open Competition – Assessment Criteria for the Longlisting Stage

1. Abstract (Research Quality, Design, and Contribution)	
What is being assessed: The extent to which the abstract demonstrates a well-conceived, viable, and intellectually rigorous PhD project.	
Relevant questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clearly articulated research problem and (set of) research question(s)? • Is the project grounded in an identifiable theoretical framework or body of literature? Are the objectives logically derived from the problem and literature? • Are the data sources and methods appropriate to the questions posed? • Is the project feasible within the timeframe of a PhD (or 1+3.5 route)? • Does the project indicate a potential contribution to knowledge, policy, or practice? 	
Score	Descriptor
6 Outstanding	Exceptionally clear and well-structured. Research question is sharp and significant. Strong theoretical framing, clearly identified gap in literature, coherent objectives, credible data sources and methods. Demonstrates strong potential for major academic and practical contribution
5 Excellent	Very clear and well-developed. Research question, theory, and methods are coherent and persuasive. Identifies a meaningful gap and a plausible contribution. Minor limitations only.
4 Very Good	Clear and coherent abstract. Theoretical framing and objectives are appropriate but may be conventional or slightly underdeveloped. Feasible and credible.
3 Good	Research idea is identifiable but lacks focus, depth, or clarity. Theoretical or methodological elements are under-specified. Contribution is plausible but limited.
2 Marginal	Weakly formulated research problem; vague theory or methods; unclear contribution; questionable feasibility.
1 Unsuitable	No clear research question, weak or incoherent design, no meaningful theoretical or scholarly contribution.
2. Interdisciplinarity	
What is being assessed: The extent to which the project genuinely engages with more than one disciplinary tradition in a meaningful way.	
Relevant questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project draw on theories, concepts, or literatures from more than one discipline? • Are methods from one field applied to problems in another, or are multiple methods combined? • Is interdisciplinarity integrated into the research design, rather than added superficially? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the applicant demonstrate awareness of the epistemological or methodological challenges of interdisciplinary research? Has the applicant shown any previous experience or training in interdisciplinary work? 	
Score	Descriptor
6 Outstanding	Interdisciplinarity is integral to the research design. Strong theoretical and/or methodological integration across disciplines. Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of how disciplines interact.
5 Excellent	Clear and convincing interdisciplinary rationale. Disciplines are meaningfully combined, not merely juxtaposed.
4 Very Good	Interdisciplinary elements are present and relevant, though integration may be uneven or partly implicit.
3 Good	More than one discipline is mentioned, but links are superficial or additive rather than integrated.
2 Marginal	Limited or negligible interdisciplinarity; primarily single-discipline.
1 Unsuitable	No meaningful interdisciplinarity.
3. Data-Driven Research	
What is being assessed: The extent to which the project is substantively grounded in data and demonstrates an appropriate methodological strategy.	
Relevant questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the type and scale of data clearly specified? Is there a logical link between theory, research questions, and data? Does the proposal go beyond description to indicate analysis, modelling, or interpretation? Does the applicant demonstrate relevant technical, computational, or analytical skills, or a credible plan to acquire them? Is the project aligned with LISS's emphasis on data-driven social science? 	
Score	Descriptor
6 Outstanding	Data strategy is explicit, appropriate, and theoretically informed. Strong evidence of advanced or well-developed data skills. Analysis is clearly linked to research questions and theory.
5 Excellent	Data types and methods are well described and appropriate. Applicant shows good evidence of relevant analytical skills.
4 Very Good	Data and methods are plausible but not fully specified. Skills are adequate but may require development.
3 Good	Some mention of data and analysis, but vague, limited, or weakly connected to theory.
2 Marginal	Poorly developed or inappropriate data strategy; little evidence of relevant skills.
1 Unsuitable	No meaningful data or analytical strategy.

4. Impact	
What is being assessed: The relevance and thoughtfulness of the project's academic and non-academic benefit and the credibility of pathways to impact.	
Relevant questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the potential academic contribution clearly articulated? • Are non-academic beneficiaries (policy, industry, civil society, public) clearly identified? • Are the proposed pathways to impact realistic and appropriate? • Does the applicant demonstrate awareness of how research moves beyond academia? • Is impact integrated into the design of the research, rather than treated as an afterthought? 	
Score	Descriptor
6 Outstanding	Clear, realistic, and well-articulated academic and societal impact. Strong, credible engagement plans with relevant stakeholders.
5 Excellent	Strong and convincing impact case with plausible pathways beyond academia.
4 Very Good	Impact is identified and relevant but may be generic or lightly developed.
3 Good	Impact mentioned but vague, aspirational, or weakly linked to the research.
2 Marginal	Limited or implausible impact.
1 Unsuitable	No credible academic or societal impact.
5. Suitability for LISS DTP	
What is being assessed: The applicant's academic preparedness, potential, and fit with the LISS DTP community and training environment.	
Relevant questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of academic excellence or trajectory (grades, prizes, publications, scholarships, presentations) • Evidence of research readiness (methods, writing, project work, independent study) • Professional or lived experience that strengthens the proposed research • Motivation for and fit with LISS interdisciplinary, data-driven, and impact-oriented ethos • Likely contribution to the DTP cohort and research culture 	
Score	Descriptor
6 Outstanding	Exceptional academic or professional profile. Strong achievements, clear doctoral readiness, and excellent fit with LISS ethos and community.
5 Excellent	Very strong profile with clear evidence of potential and motivation for doctoral research.
4 Very Good	Solid academic and/or professional background; suitable for doctoral study.

3 Good	Adequate preparation but limited evidence of research excellence or readiness.
2 Marginal	Weak academic profile or unclear fit with doctoral research.
1 Unsuitable	Not prepared for doctoral-level study.