

# TRANSFORMING CONSTRUCTION NETWORK PLUS

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## CALL OUTLINE

ROUND 2: EARLY CAREER  
RESEARCHER FUNDING

## TRANSFORMING CONSTRUCTION NETWORK PLUS

### ABOUT THE TRANSFORMING CONSTRUCTION NETWORK PLUS

The **Transforming Construction Network Plus (N+)** unites construction's academic and industrial communities to create a new research and knowledge base, dedicated to addressing the systemic problems holding back the sector.<sup>1</sup>

The N+ is led by the [UCL Bartlett School of Construction and Project Management](#), in partnership with [Imperial College London](#) and [WMG, University of Warwick](#). It is funded by UKRI, as an investment under the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) (ISCF). The aim of the N+ is to provoke, enable and amplify innovation, through four main objectives:

- **Knowledge:** to inform new research and development (R&D) models and government policy that link digital, construction, manufacturing and energy to improve productivity
- **Community building:** to advance collaborations through knowledge exchange and debate, beyond what is currently possible
- **Business models:** to produce user-informed, practical resources that accelerate pathways to manufacture and delivery
- **Investment and legacy:** to de-risk and increase construction sector business R&D spend and enable new R&D collaborations that outline the N+ two-year grant.

The N+ focuses on supporting research that takes a holistic approach, which means thinking of construction as a production 'system' for built assets that adds value to cities and their infrastructures. Transforming design, construction and operation of buildings is a problem that demands input from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines, which is why major, coordinated investments are being made through the [Transforming Construction Challenge](#).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://bit.ly/transforming-construction-network-plus>

## FUNDING CALL – EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER FUNDING

**This Call document contains all the key information about the Funding Round 2 of the N+ and describes in detail the types of funding, scope, ambition and impact that applicants are expected to address in their proposals.**

Applications must be interdisciplinary, collaborative and led by an academic institution. All applications must be in line with the expectations of the Industrial Strategy, the Construction Sector Deal and the N+ objectives.

A separate document is available for the Small Projects Call, which is open to ECR and non-ECR communities.

The N+ is looking to fund ‘discipline-hopping’ projects for Early Career Researchers (ECR). This document explains what is required from applicants.

### Timetable

Call opens – launch date	Thursday 19 September 2019
Briefing Workshop, Online webinar	9.00 – 10.00, Wednesday 25 September 2019
Closing time and date for applications	16.00, Thursday 14 November 2019
Funding decision	Monday 16 December 2019
Projects may start from	Monday 3 February 2020
Expected end date for Round 2 projects	Friday 31 July 2020

Successful teams will be required to attend and make presentations at the following events:

N+ Strategy Board meeting	Wednesday 11 March 2020
N+ Annual Conference, London	September 2020 – date to be confirmed

Grant Name	Maximum Value per project	Amount Available in this Call	Project duration
Early Career Researcher Funding	£25,000 (at 80% FEC) – applicants may request less than this	£ 100,000	3 to 6 months – applicants may request shorter durations than this

## Scope

This call aims to allow people in the ECR community to pursue an immersive experience in other disciplines or academic environments, i.e. discipline-hopping. The discipline-hopping mechanism is deployed by research funders to enable independent scholars to develop new skills by interacting with scholars or user communities in other domains.

In this instance, the N+ is opening a discipline-hopping call in a bid to enable scholars (early career researchers) to develop a multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary approach to respond to one of the challenges set in the Transforming Construction Challenge Agenda.

Transforming design, construction and operation of buildings is a problem that demands input from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines, so new, **interdisciplinary** collaborations are strongly encouraged. Drawing ideas, methods or theories from other disciplines could hold great potential. Taking a novel or different (e.g. interdisciplinary) perspective on cross-cutting sectoral challenges, such as procurement, productivity and performance is welcomed.

Applicants to this Call may have a background in construction and propose to use their skills in a new discipline, but not necessarily so. For instance, a construction management researcher may feel they would benefit from understanding more about business models, in which case they might decide to visit a business school and co-produce a paper, which draws on the expertise they have learned about – or indeed, from the conversations they have had there with experienced academics, say on a draft paper. Alternatively, applicants may come from other expertise or discipline areas, and decide to learn from a domain within the construction area to apply into their own discipline. Here are two examples of what is meant by discipline-hopping:

- *Example 1: An ECR with a background in the management of public sector construction projects decides to visit a group in a leading business school that specialises in retail logistics, to understand more about theories of supply chain management and how this could explain how to deal with inherent uncertainties in the flow of funding for government-supported building projects.*
- *Example 2: An ECR from the social sciences with an interest in applications of technology acceptance models, decides to spend time in an engineering laboratory that focuses on novel fabrication techniques for building products, to better understand the manufacturing design process and reflect on how user expectations are considered.*

All successful applicants are expected to immerse themselves in the discipline they are hopping into – for instance, a move of location and/or department would be expected within this scheme for a full-time period, up to a maximum of six months.

Immersion is a key feature of the scheme – ad hoc or occasional visits are not eligible. **Only stays within the UK are permitted.** Workshops with groups of academics and/or multiple stakeholders may be included provided that the applicant makes clear how this will achieve a discipline-hopping outcome.

Applicants must set out a convincing case – both in terms of the discipline to which an applicant is hopping, and the precise destination organisation/s they intend to visit. They must also demonstrate how the stay will enable them to develop their capabilities such that they can develop a forward research plan that exploits their new found knowledge, skills and potentially, new collaborations.

**Letters of support** from both home and destination (host) organisation/s are required.

Regardless of the destination/s, the applicant shall comply with any requirements of their home institution in respect of ethics, risk, and permission to travel/undertake fieldwork.

### **Briefing webinar**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to register for the webinar scheduled on **Wednesday 25 September, between 9.00 and 10.00am**. This will form an important opportunity to understand more about the Call and what is expected.

### **Eligibility**

- Early Career Researchers shall typically be no more than four years post award of PhD/EngD. They may be within a researcher role or an academic role at the point of application.
- A Co-Investigator shall be named who shall act as a mentor in the host institution to oversee projects. The Co-Investigator shall be employed continuously by the host University (i.e. their post will outlast the project) and shall not be an ECR.
- Any organisation that is eligible to receive **UKRI funding**, typically academic institutions, may apply to this call.
- **Funding shall be awarded only to the Lead University.** UCL will contract with the Home University only. Any subsequent distribution of funding to the host institution or other project partner shall be the responsibility of the Lead University. It is the responsibility of the organisations involved to put any necessary agreements in place before the award begins. The terms of any such agreements must not conflict the Research Councils' terms and conditions.

### **Eligible costs**

Resources requested will primarily include:

- ECR salary (up to 100% FTE)
- Travel and subsistence within the UK, while away from the home institution
- Co-Investigator/mentor salary at the destination (hosting) institution to provide the necessary training and guidance (up to 10% FTE)
- Bench fees at the destination (hosting) institution

The award shall be held by the investigator's home institution and estates and indirect costs, if applicable, should be calculated at the home institution's rates. Under standard FEC rules, we can pay 80% of the cost of the ECR salary (including estates and indirect costs subject to the normal restrictions on payment of estates costs during periods of absence) for time spent on discipline hopping activities.

## Ineligible costs

Payment of any replacement salary costs (e.g. to cover teaching commitments) cannot be provided by the N+; any such costs should be covered by the HEI from the funding source that would have met the salary cost of the PI for that period covered by the discipline-hopping award.

We do not expect to fund projects that are based solely on visits to industrial facilities; however, applicants may make a case for a blended approach, i.e. with the main stay at an academic institution which is supplemented by a short visit to, or input from, an industry partner.

Equipment costs will not be supported.

## Expectations and requirements

A minimum of two letters of support are required for all applications, the quality of which will be assessed under the Management criterion.

1. From a Head of Department or equivalent, at the applicant's home institution. This should confirm the ECR's eligibility to apply to this scheme and set out the organisation's commitment to the ECR during the project period. Specifically, it shall provide full assurance that the ECR shall be released from their duties to undertake the discipline hopping activities as per their request.
2. From a Head of Department or equivalent, at the destination institution. It should set out the organisation's commitment to host the ECR, and make clear how the stay will be supported. Specifically, it shall name the person expected to act as host/mentor during the stay and confirm the expected period of the visit.

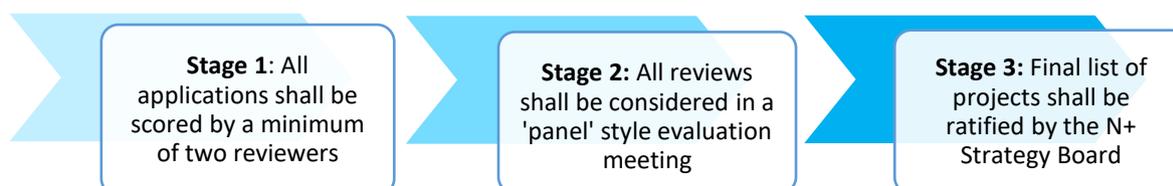
Beyond the discipline hopping activities, all ECR would be expected to participate actively in the N+ and its events programme. This applies to the ECR and any others involved in their support. The overall success of the N+ relies on those involved demonstrating positive, interdisciplinary engagement with the Transforming Construction agenda.

More broadly, applicants shall put forward clear plans on how best to build links and contacts with potential beneficiaries and users, and to work towards co-production of knowledge with research users. It is vital that the economic and societal impact of all projects funded by UKRI is maximised. Applicants are expected to include requests for such costs within their project application. In addition, applicants shall:

- **Provide updates on progress (if requested) and comply with mid and end project requests for reporting** (both during the project and post-completion). Reporting requirements will be provided to successful ECR. These shall align with UKRI templates and ResearchFish (see [ResearchFish website](#)) and include commentary on whether aims have been achieved, methods used, data produced, publications or other outputs, other outcomes, impact achieved and planned, problems encountered, and forward plans.

- **Attend N+ events, as required.** This shall include presentations to the N+ Strategy Board, N+ ECR Networking Events and Annual Conference in September 2020 (see **Key Dates**).
- **Promote and amplify the N+ through their own networks.** The N+ Communications Officer will maintain contact with successful applicants and those subscribed to receive updates to ensure that important information and announcements are disseminated widely.

## Selection Process



**Important note: The N+ reserves the right to reject proposals that are incomplete and that do not meet the requirements highlighted** on the checklist before sending them to reviewers. The checklist can be found in the Application Form.

## Scoring

There are five Primary Criteria against which all proposals shall be assessed. Each contains three key points, as shown below. All applications shall be assessed against the same criteria, regardless of the size of request. Reviewers shall assess the size of the request solely in the *Value for Money* criterion. Proposals shall be scored against each of the five criteria on a scale of 0-3, as follows:

- 0 = sub-criteria not met
- 1 = sub-criteria partially met
- 3 = sub-criteria fully met

## Scoring Criteria

<b>Contribution to the TCC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>State clearly the aim and objectives of the project, its level of ambition, and the choice of the research field</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe the problem that is to be investigated, with reference to the evidence base (including references to literature) and demonstrate its novelty</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain clearly how the project will contribute to the objectives of the N+ and the TCC</i></li> </ul>
<b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Justify the discipline-hopping approach from an academic perspective, i.e. explaining the theoretical or methodological basis for the stay</i></li> <li>• <i>Justify the approach from an inter-disciplinary perspective, i.e. explaining the specific activities that will be undertaken during the stay</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>State the proposed outputs and outcomes from the project, with reference to destination journals, conferences and industry groups, and where applicable, potential follow-on projects</i></li> </ul>
<b>Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Justify the suitability of the applicant and the host/destination institution, with reference to track record/s, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&amp;I)</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain (with a timetable<sup>2</sup> and work package/task structure) how you will ensure you deliver the project on time, including sufficient engagement and networking</i></li> <li>• <i>Provide an account of the key risks and how you will manage these (include any risks in respect of ethics, data management<sup>3</sup>, and staffing)</i></li> </ul>
<b>Value for money</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Provide a clear justification for all resources requested<sup>4</sup></i></li> <li>• <i>Explain why your request is appropriate, given your project scope, ambition etc.</i></li> <li>• <i>Make reference to your long-term plans for follow-on funding and collaboration</i></li> </ul>
<b>Impact<sup>5</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain which skills will be gained through the stay/discipline-hopping activities and how it will be applied to your research</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe the long-term effect that you expect your project to have on the Transforming Construction agenda, and how you would expect this impact to be measured or recognised</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain how this proposal may lead to long-term innovative research or future collaborations</i></li> </ul>

## Submissions

- To download an application pack, visit the [Transforming Construction N+ website](#)
- The deadline for submissions is **16.00, Friday 14 November 2019**
- Submissions should be sent to this email address: [enquiries.tcnetworkplus@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries.tcnetworkplus@ucl.ac.uk).

## Enquiries:

A FAQ page is available on the [N+ website](#). Please check it if you have any questions regarding the Funding Call.

## Contact

For all enquiries about the Call, please contact [enquiries.tcnetworkplus@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries.tcnetworkplus@ucl.ac.uk) and join our mailing list [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> A clear timetable or Gantt chart for the project and the intended progress of the research through the different stages.

<sup>3</sup> Research data quality and provenance are important. Research data generated must be well-managed by the grant holder during the grant period to enable their data to be best exploited for further research.

<sup>4</sup> The justification of resources should explain why the resources requested are appropriate for the research proposed, taking into account the nature and complexity of the research proposal.

<sup>5</sup> Describe how the potential impacts of your research will be realised. This is specific to users and beneficiaries of the research who are outside of the academic research community (e.g. industry and policy makers). Applicants are advised to use [Fast Track Impact – Impact Planning Template](#).