CALL FOR CASE STUDY CO-LEADS: CHALLENGE CASE STUDY 3

Challenge 3 – Design in a heavily regulated industry

Call Type: Invitation for Proposals – Flexible Funding
Closing Date: **4pm on 31 July 2026**

1. SUMMARY

The **EPSRC Digital Design Network Plus (D2N+)** is appointing two Case Study Co-Leads to take responsibility for developing, managing and monitoring an engineering Digital Design Challenge Case Study which will be undertaken by teams drawn from network members across the UK. **Funding of up to £50,000** is available at standard EPSRC rates (i.e. 80% of FEC (max award £40,000)) to cover academic staff time, consumables and travel. The Case Study Leads will be responsible for defining the Challenge Case Study, managing the call for researchers/participants, oversight of Challenge Case Study awards and reporting findings at the end. We anticipate there being approximately 20 awards for this case study, comprising 4 or 5 teams.

There will also be funding available for PDRA time to support the development and preparation of Case Study resources. The process for allocating this PDRA funding will be decided by the D2N+ leadership in conjunction with the Case Study 3 Co-Leads after they have been appointed.

The call is open to **early and mid-career academics** who have not yet reached Professorial status, and who are eligible to receive EPSRC funding.

Activity	**Date**
Call Launch & Official Open Date	2nd July 2026
Q&A for Applicants	TBC
Closing date for applications	**31st July 2026**
Results conveyed to candidates by:	WKC 14 Aug 2026
The follow-on call for Case Study 3 participants must be completed by November 2027 with the Case study work formally commencing in January 2027	

2. BACKGROUND

The Digital Design Network Plus (D2N+) is one of six networks funded to address Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges (TERC). The TERC report highlighted the opportunities that will be created if the deep-rooted strengths in engineering (and science) disciplines were reimagined to transform how we approach complex systemic and interrelated challenges. D2N+ was established to create an active digital design community that will define, set and prioritize key Engineering Design challenges and viable solution pathways that will exploit

digital design technologies and help UK engineering transition to net zero faster. The founding partners in the network are Queen's University Belfast, University of Bristol, University of Strathclyde and University of Sheffield.

A key objective of the network is to assemble a diverse and inclusive community of practice in engineering digital design and grow it through a shared endeavour of tackling a series of Design Challenges. Through solving these challenges, together, we want to demonstrate that we can design:

- **Faster** - compressing the overall process and exploring more of the design space in depth.
- **Better** - creating products and systems that better meet customer needs, while better addressing societal challenges and satisfying constraints of existing infrastructure & systems.
- **With less** - reducing design effort and resources, and the footprint of the product's lifecycle.

3. WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

The Challenge Case Study Co-Leads will:

- Work collaboratively with the other Challenge Case Study Co-Leads
- Work with network partners to define the details of the Challenge Case Study 3
- Manage the call for researchers to solve the Case Study challenge
- Help assemble the researcher teams from the applicants
- Keep in contact with researchers funded to solve the case study
- Attend the Digital Design Network Plus workshops 3 and 4 (Workshop 3 will be in Sheffield on 1st and 2nd December 2026 and workshop 4 will be in Belfast from 30 November to 2 December 2027.)
- Report on the solutions and findings of the Challenge Case study
- Attend Digital Design Network Plus management meetings, while the Case Study is active, to report on progress

Successful applicants must be able to demonstrate the following essential experiences:

- Leadership and management experience and potential/willingness.
- Experience in Engineering Design, Digital Technologies and Digital Design.
- Experience working with multiple stakeholder groups, ideally those listed in the network (RTOs, software vendors, end-users and academic communities).

Digital Design: Challenge 3 – Design in a heavily regulated industry

Challenge Case Study 3 focuses on demonstrating how digital design can be 'Faster and Better with Less' within heavily regulated environments. To align with our sister TERC network, 4D Healthcare Technologies, this challenge centres on medical device design. We are seeking innovative thinkers from a wide spectrum of disciplines. Whether your expertise lies in biomedical engineering, software development, industrial design, or any other digital or engineering field, we want to hear from you. Previous experience with medical devices is completely optional. We are looking for fresh perspectives and transferable skills.

4. WHAT WE WILL FUND

Funding of up to £50,000 is available at standard EPSRC rates (i.e. 80% of FEC (max award £40,000)) to cover academic staff time, consumables and travel. Funding for Research Assistant time or PhD students is not available. This funding should cover all costs associated with travel you anticipate carrying out as part of the role, including attending the network workshops devoted to reviewing the solutions to the Case Study being led.

Additional funding is available for PDRA support, which will be provided to the Co-Lead team once it is appointed.

5. EQUIPMENT

Due to the nature of the role funding for equipment is not eligible.

6. ELIGIBILITY

The call is open to all UK academics whose institutions are eligible to receive EPSRC funding. Due to the responsibilities of the role candidates should ideally be mid-career and should not yet be at Professorial level.

7. HOW TO APPLY

Please complete the Case Study 3 Co-Lead Application Form

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

D2N+ is fully committed to supporting and promoting EDI in all its practices and activities. We aim to establish an inclusive environment and welcome diverse applications from all protected characteristics. We particularly encourage applications from women, as this cohort is under-represented in engineering across academia and industry.

9. Terms & conditions of the award

Successful applications will be required to enter into a legal binding agreement with Queen's University Belfast that will incorporate the UK Research and Innovation standard terms and conditions of the grant.

10. GDPR

The data you provide will be utilized and deleted in alignment with GDPR requirements.

11. Contact

Applicants are asked to consult their university's research office ahead of submitting a proposal to this call, to be clear of the requirements for meeting the deadlines set out in this document. The award is contractually and financially from Queen's University Belfast to the University in question.

If you have further questions, please e-mail: digitaldesignnetwork@qub.ac.uk

Proposals must be submitted by 31 July 2026. The D2N+ team will acknowledge receipt of each proposal.

12. Application Form

Please ensure you read the guidance in connection with the post prior to completing the application form, it can be found here:

Challenges - Digital Design Network Plus

Application Form