The University of Edinburgh

Doctoral Landscape Award

Open PhD Competition Guidance 2026 entry

Contents

1. Doctoral Landscape Award

The University of Edinburgh is offering three Doctoral Landscape Awards in 2026/27 with a maximum of 1 award available for an international fee applicant. Awards are available within three eligible Disciplinary Panels.

Our funded PhD projects will be hallmarks of excellence and originality, enabled by environments where excellent research is supported and conducted.

Our prestigious studentships offer a maximum of 4 years of funding with options of how to tailor the funding to suit the needs of your project and your professional goals:

- Fully funded PhD studentships with a UKRI stipend of around £20,780 per annum plus tuition fees
- The best research environment and supervisory team
- Access, via to the Doctoral Landscape Award Hub, to:
  - Cohort-responsive training;
  - Interdisciplinary, methodological and creative development through three skills development spokes: *Concepts and Critiques, Empirical Enquiry*, and *Creative Practice*;
  - Internships and collaborative partnerships, including engagement with the existing Knowledge Exchange Hubs *Heritage, Creative Economies, Citizenship & Policy.*

Successful applicants will be required to submit their thesis for examination within a maximum of 4 years (or part-time equivalent). Time to submit can be extended during the funded period in line with UKRI medical leave and family leave conditions and in line with UKVI visa immigration conditions.

2. Why choose the University of Edinburgh?

We are a vibrant and diverse community of researchers, committed to producing outstanding research that enriches our culture and society, and enhances justice, well-being and sustainability across the globe. As a global powerhouse for the Arts and Humanities, the University of Edinburgh is a destination of choice for research students and staff who are curious and want to better understand our complex and changing world. We offer rich opportunities for collaboration across a broad spectrum of disciplines to advance knowledge that addresses major societal and global challenges.

Our PhD graduates will be future leaders, committed to generating and mobilising new insights across scholarly, professional and public communities. They will be capable, caring, ethical & reflective professionals, and their work will demonstrate the value of arts and humanities to society, industry and other disciplines.

3. The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub

It is planned that the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities (SGSAH) will be the home of the AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award Hub. This Hub will offer collective doctoral training and development activities to the funded cohort of Doctoral Landscape Award (DLA) PhD studentship holders, sometimes in partnership with broader communities of Arts & Humanities doctoral researchers across all 17 of SGSAH's member Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). More details of the projected training are provided below, in order to assist applicants in developing their training and development plans.

Please note that some details of the Hub activity may change, pending confirmation of Hub funding from the AHRC. Any changes will be clearly flagged via the SGSAH website.

SGSAH are hosting a webinar about the work of the Hub on 3rd November 2025 at 3pm.

The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub: Training and Development Overview

The DLA Hub training offer is projected to comprise of three key and mandatory components, each complementing and enhancing the offer in individual HEIs, leveraging collaboration within the DLA Hub and through the wider SGSAH consortium. The components are:

DLA Hub Training Model

Cohort Leadership Programme:

Year 1: Getting Started

Years 2 and 3: Research with Impact

Years 3 and 4 –Transitions beyond the PhD

Skills Development Training:

Delivered by 3 Skills Development 'Spokes':

- Concepts and Critiques
- Empirical Enquiry
- Creative Practice

KE & Impact:

Delivered through 3 Knowledge Exchange Hubs :

- Citizenship, Culture and Ethics
- Creative Economies
- Heritage

<u>The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub: Cohort Leadership Programme</u>

The Cohort Leadership Programme will bring together DLA award-holders as a Scotland-wide cohort, spanning universities and disciplines. This will foster collaboration, allowing students to benefit from sector-leading Arts & Humanities training from academics across all Hub universities, and to build networks. A stepped training and development programme will be delivered via a range of in-person, hybrid and online events, including short sessions, day-long and residential events. The Cohort Leadership Programme will build thematically through successive years, with combinations of year specific and multi-year activity, the latter cascading experience across cohorts. These will be delivered through a three-step framework:

- **Year 1 GETTING STARTED: inducting students to the Hub and enabling them to embark on their PhD**
  The centrepiece will include a residential event held early in the academic year, introducing Year 1 students to the Hub and its full range of training activities, providing cohort-building opportunities, and discussing training needs and priorities. Student representatives from Years 2 and 3 will be invited to speak about their experience of the Hub (or, in Year 1, from existing DTP2 students) and of using Hub funding to develop student-led cohort activities. This induction will complement a broader SGSAH Welcome event, which highlights the wider opportunities available to all doctoral researchers in Scotland through SGSAH, supported by the Scottish Funding Council and extending to SGSAH's full HEI membership.

- **Year 2-3 RESEARCH WITH IMPACT: focuses on honing the skills to deliver the core PhD research and realise wider societal benefits**
  All cohorts will come together for a residential event timed as part of the broader SGSAH Summer School, enabling wider networking opportunities across DLA cohorts and beyond. Topics covered will include three-minute thesis presentations, research internships, knowledge exchange and other opportunities. Year 2 and 3 students will share their research and KE activities via posters, stands, and short presentations.

- **Year 3-4 TRANSITIONS BEYOND THE PHD: in the final two years, the Cohort Leadership Programme pivots to focus on future careers and outputs within and beyond academia**
  Events in Years 3 and 4 will cement networking; support planning for postdoctoral career pathways, both academic and non-academic; prepare for submission, examination and any post-examination corrections; focus on outputs (including publishing) from the thesis and creative practice; introduce postdoctoral networks and opportunities; and facilitate alumni connections.

The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub: Skills Development Training

In addition to core training for the entire cohort, the Hub will also offer specific grounding in Arts & Humanities research skills. This offer will complement the disciplinary expertise and individual training plans developed and delivered within the University of Edinburgh. It will be structured via three 'Spokes', allowing the Hub to respond to cohort needs while maintaining consistency and promoting awareness of the full scale and scope of Arts & Humanities research. The 'Spokes' are:

- **Concepts and Critiques**: training focused on the ideas, methods, concepts, and frameworks that underpin research. This element of the programme will hone researchers' ability to work confidently, fluidly, and in a cross-disciplinary manner.
- **Empirical Enquiry**: training to develop the cutting-edge skills necessary for data gathering for Arts & Humanities research, whether through archival enquiry, working with images and objects, through surveys or interviews, or quantification, within ethical frameworks.
- **Creative Practice:** training exploring all forms of creative practice as research and creative methodologies, including writing, composing and performing arts within creative industry contexts.

All disciplinary areas hosting DLA students will be involved in developing events, and the Hub will provide funding to enable students to co-develop training events with staff. Students will be required to attend at least one 'spoke' training event each year and encouraged to participate in more.

Events will be delivered through a combination of online and face-to-face activities, ensuring that training is accessible and inclusive to students with different needs and in different geographical locations.

The continuing training activities delivered by SGSAH's 11 Discipline+ Catalysts will also appear in the programme of training linked to the Spokes.

The SGSAH Summer School is a well-established flagship for Arts & Humanities training in Scotland, available to any Arts & Humanities PhD researcher in member HEIs and delivered through a blend of online and face-to-face training. Spring into Methods, SGSAH's collaboration with SGSSS, will also continue to offer innovative methodological training beyond disciplinary boundaries and beyond the Arts & Humanities.

The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub: Knowledge Exchange and Impact

Knowledge Exchange (KE) and Impact will form a key strand of the Hub training offer. SGSAH's three KE Hubs (Citizenship, Culture and Ethics; Creative Economies; Heritage), offer routes into collaboration with external partners from public, private

and third sector organisations, including via internships and the artist residencies programme. This training will act as a springboard for collaboration with key national institutions and stakeholders, including SGSAH's ten core partners (BBC Scotland, British Council, Built Environment Forum Scotland, Creative Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Interface, National Museums Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Parliament, V&A), and with research centres and institutes in HEIs across Scotland. You may wish to consult the list of other organisations that SGSAH has worked with.

DLA PhD researchers will attend at least one KE and Impact event per year, benefitting from insights and expertise drawn from Arts & Humanities stakeholders across Scotland to co-create and translate their research into impact, societal engagement and employability.

The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub: Responsive Model

From the point of studentship awards, the University of Edinburgh will offer the Hub an initial assessment of their students' training needs aligned to the three Skills Development Training Spokes, KE and Impact activity and Cohort Leadership Programme. The Year 1 induction and Year 2/3 events will then allow a more detailed dialogue between the Hub leadership and the cohorts, enabling students to co-develop the training offer in relation to their needs.

Subject areas hosting DLA students will contribute to Skills Development Training, ensuring a close alignment to DLA student needs, while also extending responses to those needs across the cohort and the wider Scottish HE landscape.

SGSAH will maintain Cohort Development Fund opportunities for students to design and deliver cohort-level training opportunities. These opportunities will align with and be promoted through the Skills Development Training Spokes and KE Hubs.

4. Application and Selection Process

Please read this guidance and the assessment criteria thoroughly before applying and ensure you are reading the most recent version. It is essential that you discuss the application with your supervisor/s and have their approval to submit.

The completed Doctoral Landscape Award funding application must be emailed to the relevant School by 5pm GMT 27th November 2025. Late applications will not be accepted.

You must also submit a PhD admission application for 2026/27 by 5pm on the deadline indicated below:

PhD Philosophy - **10th November 2025**
Edinburgh College of Art – **17th November 2025**
Literatures, Languages and Cultures - **17th November 2025**
School of Divinity and PhD Social Anthropology – **20th November 2025**

Current PhD students are not eligible for this funding.

Disciplinary Panel	School(s)	DLA Funding Application to be returned to
Media, Communications, Cultural Policy, Film and TV, Library and Information Studies	Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LLC)	ECA: ecaresearchdegrees@ed.ac.uk LLC: llc.pgscholarships@ed.ac.uk
Philosophy	Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences (PPLS)	PPLS: pplspgoffice@ed.ac.uk
Theology, Divinity & Religions	Divinity PhD Social Anthropology within the School of Social and Political Science (SPS)	Divinity: Div.PGRAdmin@ed.ac.uk SPS: pgresearch.sps@ed.ac.uk

Selection Process and Timeline

PhD application deadline (varies per School)	PPLS – 10th November 2025
	ECA and LLC – 17th November 2025
	Divinity and SPS – 20th November 2025
Doctoral Landscape Award funding application deadline	27th November 2025
Stage 1 selection by Disciplinary Panel	December 2025
Stage 2 selection by Disciplinary Panel	January and early February 2026
Stage 3 selection by cross-Disciplinary Panel	February 2026
Notification of outcomes	Early March 2026
PhD start date	14th September 2026

The selection process has three stages. At the first stage, the relevant Disciplinary Panel will consider and score the information on the funding application against the Assessment Criteria (p. 30), using this scoring assessment to shortlist applicants. Shortlisted applicants must hold a PhD admissions offer for 2026 entry in an eligible subject. Applicants made unsuccessful at this stage will be notified by the School.

At the second stage, the lead supervisor of shortlisted applicants will be asked to provide a Supervisory Statement. The Disciplinary Panel will then shortlist applicants to proceed to the third selection stage. Applicants made unsuccessful at this stage will be notified by the School by early January 2026.

At the third stage, a cross-Disciplinary Panel will select the top applicants for each award. Applicants will be notified at this stage if they are successful or on a reserve list. The Postgraduate Research team of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences will issue award letters to successful applicants. We will not be able to provide information about where an applicant is placed on the reserve list.

Successful applicants are not allowed to defer the funding to a later year of entry or take the Doctoral Landscape funding to another institution.

5. Guidance on completing the application form

General notes on the application
You should read this guidance thoroughly before you begin your application. The

University of Edinburgh provides [advice] about how to write a good research proposal, and your supervisory team will be able to give you further tips.

Personal details
This section asks you to provide contact information. We will normally contact you by email so please ensure you use an address you check regularly, and which will be available to you until at least September 2026. Applications are reviewed anonymously. Information in this section of the form will not be shared with reviewers.

Optional Flags to Reweight Scoring Criteria
We are aware that some people face unfair structural barriers, which may be reflected in an applicant's previous academic record, even though they are fully capable of producing interesting, important and original doctoral level research. To address this, the University will use a list of Widening Participation "flags".

- Trans applicants
- First generation at University
- Recipient of a means-tested scholarship, or free school meals
- Disability/Chronic Illness
- Care experienced, or an applicant with care responsibilities
- Refugee Status

If you qualify on any of these criteria, you can indicate in Section 1 of the funding application whether you wish to have your previous qualification/relevant professional experience and preparedness for research under-weighted and your project proposal overweighted as follows:

Category	Standard Weighting	Widening Participation Re-Weighting
Qualifications/Experience	12%	6%
Proposal	28%	44%
Preparedness	20%	10%
Training Needs	20%	20%
Supervisory (scored at Stage 2 and 3 only)	20%	20%

Please note that Supervisory and Training Needs scores will be unchanged. The re-weighting will be the same, irrespective of the number of flags. Please note that this information will not be disclosed to reviewers. If, after the re-weighting process, the total score is lower, your original score will be used.

Eligibility

This section asks you to confirm whether you are eligible to apply. Please consider the following:

Acceptance onto a PhD Programme

To be eligible you must have been accepted onto a PhD programme in a discipline eligible for a Doctoral Landscape Award for 2026/27 entry.

As an example, a PhD in French which focuses on film and/or TV would be eligible in the 'Media, Communications, Cultural Policy, Film and TV, Library and Information Studies' Disciplinary Panel.

Funding applications will not be considered for candidates applying for a PhD project outside the disciplinary panels.

Current PhD students are not eligible for this funding.

If you have any queries about your eligibility, please contact the relevant School postgraduate research team at the University of Edinburgh for advice and guidance at an early stage in the process.

Reasonable distance

Distance PhD students are not eligible for this funding.

AHRC studentships are awarded on the condition that the doctoral researcher lives within a 'reasonable distance' from their lead university. University of Edinburgh students must attend and participate as required in all aspects of their programme of study. This includes being available for teaching sessions, assessment, examination and meeting Programme Directors or supervisors face-to-face and/or electronically. Students are expected to attend and participate in person, including during the period spent working on a dissertation or research project (with the exception of periods offered for any post-viva resubmission of PhD projects, where in-person attendance may not be required).

Fee Status

All funded PhD students, whether UK or International, will be eligible for a full award – both a stipend to support living costs and tuition fees at the home (i.e. UK) rate.

These AHRC-funded awards are governed by the terms and conditions set by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which oversees the work of Research Councils such as the AHRC. As per guidance published by UKRI in 2020, a minimum of 70% of all studentships awarded within a UKRI grant will be made to home students, while a maximum of 30% of all studentships awarded can be made to international students.

Please note that it is not a requirement for 30% of studentships to be awarded to international students, as the quality of applications will always remain the primary assessment criterion during the competition. In addition, some highly ranked international students may not be able to receive an award due to the 30% cap.

The cap on international studentships means that the University of Edinburgh can award 1 award per year to International students (including those from EU states). The University of Edinburgh will waive the difference between the home fee and international fee for the award holder.

To be classed as a home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have indefinite leave to remain or enter the UK

If an applicant does not meet the criteria above, they would be classed as an international student.

Eligible Disciplinary Panels 2026/27
The Doctoral Landscape Awards will offer funding to PhD programmes within three set Disciplinary Panels. Awards will rotate across Schools and subject areas over the next 5 years.

For 2026/27, awards are only available for PhDs in the following Disciplinary Panels:

Disciplinary Panel	School(s)
Media, Communications, Cultural Policy, Film and TV, Library and Information Studies	Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) Literatures, Languages & Cultures (LLC)
Philosophy	Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences (PPLS)
Theology, Divinity & Religions	Divinity PhD Social Anthropology within the School of Social & Political Science (SPS)

Subject Area(s)

We ask you to indicate the primary subject area of your proposed PhD (e.g. Publishing). Subject areas covered within the above panels are listed in the table below. The AHRC's subject guidance can be found via the website link here.

Media (including)
- Media and Communication Studies
- Journalism
- Publishing
- Television History, Theory and Criticism
- New Media/Web-Based Studies
- Film History, Theory and Criticism

Cultural Policy & Arts Management (including)
- Policy, Arts Management and Creative Industries

Cultural Studies and Pop Culture (including)
- Gender and Sexuality

Library and Information Studies (including)
- Archives
- Records Management
- Information Science and Retrieval
- Library Studies
- Information and Knowledge Management
- Computational Studies

Information and Communications Technology (including)
- Information and Knowledge Management

Philosophy (including)
- Political Philosophy
- Philosophy of Mind
- Aesthetics
- Metaphysics
- History of Ideas
- Language and Philosophical Logic
- Epistemology
- Ethics
- History of Philosophy
- Philosophy of Science and Mathematics and Mathematical Logic

• Philosophy of Religion
Theology, Divinity & Religions (including)
• Old Testament
• Modern Theology
• Judaism
• Islam
• Liturgy
• Systematic Theology
• Church History and History of Theology
• New Testament
• East Asian Religions
• Buddhism
• Hinduism
• Jainism
• Sikhism
• Alternative Spiritualties/New Religious Movements
• Atheism/Secularism
• Inter-faith Relations
• Contemporary Religion

Qualifications

The AHRC expects applicants to have completed or to be studying towards a relevant Masters qualification. This section requires you to complete the year, and if appropriate, grade, of your qualifications.

We recognise that some applicants will have completed degrees which are non-standard or unclassified (i.e. Pass/Fail only). Where this is the case, applicants should still complete the Qualifications section with further information to be provided in the 'Preparedness to undertake doctoral study' section of the application form.

Relevant Professional Experience (300 words maximum)

This section is intended to provide a level playing field for applicants with unrelated, dated or no Masters qualifications but who have demonstrably relevant professional experience. The Relevant Professional Experience section should therefore **only** be completed by applicants who:

- do not have and are not studying towards a Masters degree or equivalent

- or are returning to Masters study after a considerable break in higher education
- or gained a Masters degree more than five years previously
- or their Masters degree is not in a relevant subject
- AND they have significant professional experience, which is relevant to their research proposal.

Whilst we recognise that some applicants who may not previously have had the opportunity to study at postgraduate level, you should be aware that a doctoral degree involves rigorous training at the highest academic level. If you are completing this section of the application, you should provide evidence that the training and development you have received are equivalent to those obtained through a Masters course and therefore prepare you to continue to doctoral study.

Research Summary (100 words maximum)
Please provide a summary of your proposed research project that will be comprehensible to non-specialists.

Research Proposal (1000 words maximum)
This section must describe your proposal and should include the title, research question(s)/problem, research context, methods and sources, originality/innovation and contribution to knowledge and knowledge exchange (KE), public engagement (PE) & impact (including academic impact).

Full bibliographic referencing is not required. Please use the subheadings below to ensure that you speak to each section of the criteria. Please do not include weblinks.

1. Research question(s)/problem

What question or problem is your project designed to answer, and why is it a timely and important one?

2. Research context, methods and sources, originality/innovation and contribution to knowledge (academic impact)

In what context/s will your study be situated? What methods and sources will you use to answer your question, and why are they particularly well suited to do so? How will your project be original?

3. Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement & Impact

What plans do you have for identifying and engaging with groups beyond universities who might be interested in, or benefit from, your research? Why might these communities be interested, and how might they benefit? How will you engage/communicate/network with these communities?

We are seeking original, innovative, cogent, and coherent proposals which are well-written in their entirety. Completion of the project should be feasible within 3.5 to 4 years or the part-time equivalent. The methodology should be demonstrably appropriate and the whole proposal well-grounded in current research literature and/or practice. The academic impact should be clearly stated: showing the demonstrable contribution that your research will make to academic advances across and/or within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methodology, theory, and application.

In addition, we hope that our doctoral graduates are committed to generating and mobilising knowledge across a range of professional and public communities. SGSAH and the University of Edinburgh aim to support you in developing KE, PE, and impact skills. You will be able to apply for funding to support activities which realise impact.

We use the UKRI definition of impact, which also includes public engagement. When we ask you to describe the impact your research might have, we are not asking you to answer your research question(s) or to anticipate the results of your research. Instead, we are asking you to consider more broadly who may be interested in and/or benefit by your research and its findings; and to describe what methods you might use to engage with these people or groups during and after your research.

You might find these questions helpful in thinking about impact:

- What is happening now – or not happening – that you think your research findings could help to change?
- Who might be interested or involved in delivering or experiencing the change that may happen as a result of your findings?
- Why would these communities be interested? How might they benefit?
- How will you engage/communicate/network with these communities? How can working with these communities help your research? Would your project benefit from planned knowledge exchange activities?
- How would you demonstrate/evidence any changes and the link back to your research findings, bearing in mind that you will be able to apply for funding to develop impact?

Preparedness for proposed doctoral project (300 words maximum)

Please demonstrate how your previous study (Undergraduate/Masters) and/or professional experience have prepared you for this doctoral project.

This might include reference to your UG and Masters programme of study and your dissertation topics, specific and appropriate methodological training and/or expertise (e.g. proficiency in a relevant language, particular IT skills etc.), work-based learning or employment in a relevant occupation, etc.

You may also wish to refer to any notable achievements, either academic (prizes, conference presentations, publications) or non-academic (professional or personal accomplishments, overcoming barriers, etc).

You may include evidence of preparedness to undertake impact or knowledge exchange activities, where relevant.

Please do not reference by name your previous places of study in this section.

Individual Training Plan (ITP) and Engagement with the Hub/University Training (400 words)

Individual Training Plan (ITP)
The funding application will ask you to indicate which funding model would best suit your research project and professional goals. Only one selection can be made. Your choice will not affect the total funds allocated to your PhD project, but it will affect the length of your stipend. The plan must be discussed and agreed with your supervisory team before you submit your application. Disciplinary Panels will take into account the suitability of the plan, how it fits the project, and whether the PhD can feasibly be completed within the funded period.

The University reserves the right to award a different funding option depending on its assessment of the project.

For applicants who require a Student Route Visa and who intend to take an internship as part of the funding, you MUST select Model D on the application form. The University is not able to support a DLA funded internship later in the PhD if this is not selected in the funding application. If you are awarded the DLA funding to include an internship, the University will arrange for you to matriculate onto a PhD programme code which includes an integrated internship.

The funding options available are:

> Model A - 3.5-year studentship + 6 months' additional funded research time.
>
> Model B - 3.5-year studentship + 3-month funded internship + 3 months' additional funded research time.
>
> Model C - 3.5-year studentship + 3-month funded visiting researcher placement/internship + associated accommodation/travel costs equivalent to 2 months' stipend + 1 month additional funded research time
>
> Model D - 3.5-year studentship + 3-month internship + 1.5-month visiting researcher placement + visiting researcher accommodation/stipend costs (equivalent to 1.5 months' stipend)
>
> Model E - 3.5-year studentship + travel and accommodation for fieldwork (equivalent to 2 months' stipend) + 4 months' additional funded research time.

Engagement with the Hub/University Training (250 words)
In this section, please detail how you will engage with the cohort-wide training opportunities offered by the Doctoral Landscape Hub (SGSAH) and the University. Include an explanation of how you will participate in the life of the Hub, noting the collaborative training opportunities, activities, and schemes in which you intend to take part within the Hub, at the University of Edinburgh and if applicable, elsewhere.

Ethics and Research Integrity (300 words)

Any project funded by the AHRC must be ethical. In this section you should identify any ethical or safety issues attached to this research project or to the associated impact plans and how these will be addressed. Please do consider this carefully as any project, including its impact plans, which is considered not to have addressed ethical issues will be deemed to be not fundable.

Please note that Ethics and Research Integrity is not scored as a separate section within the competition process, but it is important that you give this section of the form due consideration in order to indicate the proposal's quality and feasibility.

Environmental Impact Assessment

SGSAH's Green/Graduate Strategy & Operations Plan sets out our commitment to reducing the environmental impact of doctoral research in the arts and humanities. In this section applicants are asked to confirm that they will undertake appropriate measures to reduce the environmental impact of their research activities, including adhering to sustainable travel practices, conference attendance, and fieldwork activities. Successful applicants will be provided with supporting guidelines and training.

Plagiarism and Generative AI

Applicants are asked to tick a box confirming that their application constitutes their own original work, and is not plagiarised. It is anticipated that applicants have worked with supervisors and other University staff to construct their statement, but have not used generative AI.

Please note that an applicant reusing wording from their own existing work (i.e. from a masters' dissertation or published articles etc.) is not in the instance of the competition considered to be plagiarism.

SGSAH Requirements

As a SGSAH AHRC DTP-funded doctoral researcher, you are required to join and participate in at least one Spoke and KE Hub event annually. You may elect to be a member of more than one Spoke and Hub, though this is not a requirement. Please indicate which Spoke(s) and Hub(s) you will join.

Nominating Member of Staff and Email

Please provide a name and contact for your proposed lead supervisor.

6. Equalities Statement

The University of Edinburgh seeks to ensure equity of experience and opportunity for applicants to access funded studentships. The assessment process of this scheme includes the following measures designed to promote equity of experience and opportunity:

- A section of the applicant form for 'Relevant Professional Experience' is available to provide a level playing field for applicants with unrelated, dated or no Masters qualifications but who have demonstrably relevant professional experience
- Optional flagging by applicants to indicate areas of under-representation, which alters the weighting of the scoring criteria

7. Data sharing and storage

Anonymised, limited special characteristic data from applicants (such as disability, ethnicity, and other health data) will be collected and retained by the University of Edinburgh in order to fulfil our contractual obligations to our funder, the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Applications from applicants not in receipt of funding will be destroyed by 1st October 2026. Applications from nominees in receipt of funding will be retained for the duration of the studentship.

Applicants are asked to consent to the sharing of aggregated anonymised Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) information with the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH)/DLA Hub to enable them to identify inequality gaps, inform strategic planning and to create an inclusive research environment. This data will not be used to identify individuals.

Applicants are asked to consent to the sharing of individual details, including title, email address, and research summary, with the SGSAH/DLA Hub. This information will be used to help deliver essential services and comply with funding requirements including delivery of training, network building, and showcasing doctoral research.

8. School contacts and frequently asked questions

If you have any further queries, please refer to our FAQs or contact relevant School Postgraduate team. Contact details are below:

Disciplinary Panel	School(s)	Email Contact
Media, Communications, Cultural Policy, Film and TV, Library and Information Studies	Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) Literatures, Languages & Cultures (LLC)	ECA: ecaresearchdegrees@ed.ac.uk LLC: llc.pgscholarships@ed.ac.uk
Philosophy	Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences (PPLS)	PPLS: pplspgoffice@ed.ac.uk
Theology, Divinity & Religions	Divinity PhD Social Anthropology within the School of Social & Political Science (SPS)	Divinity: Div.PGRAdmin@ed.ac.uk SPS: pgresearch.sps@ed.ac.uk

Frequently asked questions

1.Can I apply for a Doctoral Landscape Award at more than one University?
Yes, you can apply to more than one University offering a Doctoral Landscape Award. However, you can accept only one Doctoral Landscape Award. You will not be able to transfer a Doctoral Landscape Award to another institution or defer the award to a later year.

2.If I am unsuccessful this year, can I apply again in future years?
The awards available each year will rotate across different Disciplinary Panels so although it may be possible, it will be unlikely that you would apply in a future year. You may wish to consider applying for an advertised Collaborative Doctoral Award project for 2027 entry. Collaborative Doctoral Award projects will be designed by supervisors and advertised to applicants in autumn 2026.

3.How will my proposal be assessed?
Your application will be assessed by a variety of relevant colleagues within the University. Professional Service teams will review your qualifications and academic colleagues will review your entire funding application.

Our marking scheme and indicative criteria are contained in this guidance on p.30.

4.When will I find out if I have been successful?
We aim to make initial offers in early March 2026.

5.Can I delay the start of my study?
Although you can request to have your PhD admission deferred, you cannot defer the Doctoral Landscape Award funding or take it to another institution.

9. Advice from successful applicants

Start early
Begin your application as early as possible. Even if you are sitting on the draft for a few weeks or months before the deadline, having time to think over your proposal, and allowing time for many edits is beyond valuable, even necessary.
- Daniel

Coming up with a good idea, identifying potential supervisors and seeking support from an institution takes time. In my experience writing a good application is also a long process, as it requires research, patience and many redrafts. But don't get demoralized, I have always been supported throughout the whole process, and useful advice has always been only one email away.
- Vlad

Find the right supervisor for you
Start by finding a potential supervisor who's enthusiastic about your project and has experience guiding PhD applicants! It's really invaluable to have good practical support for your application.
- Harry

Find a supervisor that you work well with and find inspiring. Discuss and work through your application with them in order to frame your good ideas so that they become more relevant and compelling.
- Pernille

Share your draft widely…
I also found enlisting the support of multiple proof-readers (dedicated family and friends!) who are not necessarily specialists in your area really helpful, as they can

help you simplify your language and make the content of your proposal more accessible and clear.

- Clare

Just having someone else give a second opinion on what works and what doesn't was so incredibly useful to me when I was completing my application. They can help make sure that you are getting your point across as clearly and precisely as possible, which to me was absolutely critical.
- Adam

…and make use of feedback

Don't be afraid to ask your prospective supervisors to look over drafts of your application and to take their advice on board.
- Fraser

Keep it clear

Reading my proposal to friends and family who knew little about my subject forced me to better clarify my argument and resulted in a much stronger application.
- Juliet

Have a parent, friend, or sibling read it. If they don't understand something (especially if it's specific to your field) make sure you clarify so that anyone judging from different disciplines can understand. However, find a way to not clarify too much that it weakens the proposed idea's academic integrity.
- Daniel

Think about all elements of the application

Think boldly and creatively when it comes to impact and knowledge exchange and come up with a concrete proposal offering tangible output. It can feel daunting to make claims about how your work can benefit others, but by its very nature original research produces practical advances.
- Murray

For me, it was necessary to really think about the essence of my research, my main ideas and aims, in order to submit a really polished application.
- Stefana

Draft, redraft and then redraft again

A good application requires numerous drafts and lots of time – it's not a side project to be completed on weekends.
- Mads

Be prepared for how many times you have to redraft your proposal. The application process and word limits can feel frustrating and restrictive, but it's good practice for future proposals and will ensure that you are very clear about your objectives.
- Kirsty

Go easy on yourself. It can be easy to let the application dominate your headspace in the months leading to submission. There's a fine line between redrafting and unhealthy fixation.
- Andrew

Thanks to the past and current SGSAH doctoral researchers who shared their experiences with us.

10. Guidance for Supervisors on completing the Supervisory Statement

The Supervisory Statement is only required for applicants shortlisted by a Disciplinary Panel at Stage 1, who progress to Stage 2 of the competition. It is not to be included with the funding application.

If the applicant is shortlisted, the lead supervisor will be asked by the relevant School to complete and return a Supervisory Statement template. The statement template is included in section 12 of this document.

The statement will be considered in Stage 2 to select applicants moving forward to Stage 3 of the competition, the cross-Disciplinary Panel.

The statement should be drafted with contributions from the entire supervisory team. Supervisors must be based within the University of Edinburgh. The statement is designed to allow the supervisory team to demonstrate that they offer an excellent fit for the nominated applicants and their specific PhD research project. To this end, we invite supervisors to demonstrate:

Alignment with Supervisory Team and Research Environment
(up to 400 words maximum; bullet points are acceptable)

We seek here demonstrable and persuasive evidence that the supervisory arrangements offer the applicant the best training environment possible. Questions to consider are below and responses can be in one block of text or bullet points.

1. *Why is this the right supervisory team and research environment for this project and this researcher and what role will each supervisor play in supporting the doctoral researcher?*
2. *What will the student/project add to the research environment?*
3. *How will the supervision be managed and sustained?*

Non-standard and/or unclassified qualifications

If your applicant holds a non-standard and/or unclassified qualification, we would ask you to provide further information about their qualification which will allow us to evaluate it fairly against the scoring criteria. For example, where the applicant holds an Ordinary Degree rather than an Honours Degree, contextual sectoral information may be provided. Where a degree is unclassified, you could confirm the quality of the work by making reference to the examiner's report.

Supervisory Team

In this section, we ask you to provide details of the supervisory team and indicate the weighting given to each supervisor. Lead Supervisor allocation must be more than or equal to the allocation of other supervisor(s) in the team. The Lead Supervisor must have at least 50% supervision.

Normally, doctoral supervisors supervise no more than 6 FTE doctoral researchers. Where a proposed supervisor will be supervising more than 6 FTE, a compelling mitigating rationale must be provided.

This section also invites all supervisors to list up to six relevant outputs. This is indicative and is not intended to discourage early career researchers from acting as Lead, co- or secondary supervisors. We welcome and support the development of Early Career Researchers through this funding. 'Outputs' refers to publications, practice-based research including performances, exhibitions, compositions, etc.

Confirmation of training plans

In this section, we ask supervisors to confirm that the applicant's proposed training plan has the approval of the supervisory team and that the proposed project can result in the thesis being submitted within the funded period.

Supervisors are asked to consider the following when answering:

> Successful applicants will be required to submit their PhD thesis within the funded period, which will vary from 3.5 to 4 years (or part-time equivalent), depending on the candidate's preferred funding option. Time to submit can be extended during the funded period in line with UKRI medical leave and family leave conditions and in line with UKVI visa conditions.

> Applicants who require a Student Route Visa and who intend to take an internship as part of the funding MUST select an internship option at the application stage. For this funding, the University is not able to support a request to take an internship later in the PhD. If a candidate is awarded the funding, the College will arrange for the candidate to matriculate onto a PhD programme code which includes an integrated internship so this can be correctly captured on the candidate's student visa.

Ethics & Research Integrity

Any project funded by the University must be ethical. Please indicate that you have discussed with the applicant any ethical or safety issues attached to this research project and/or its impact plans and how these will be addressed. The applicant should provide a full outline of ethical considerations in their application.

11. Supervisory Statement Template

Please return to **XXX** (*School to include suitable School email contact*) by **XXX** (*School to determine return date*)

1. Name of the PhD applicant:

2. Title of research proposal:

Lead Supervisor
Name:
School:
Email:
Subject Area:
ECR (within six years of their first academic appointment): Yes/No
Please indicate percentage of supervision:
Up to six most relevant research outputs (Can be weblinks):
Supervisor 2
Name:
School:
Email:
Subject Area:
ECR (within six years of their first academic appointment): Yes/No
Please indicate percentage of supervision:
Up to six most relevant research outputs: (Can be weblinks):

Please add any additional supervisor by cutting and pasting the box above

Alignment with Supervisory Team and Research Environment
(up to 400 words maximum; bullet points are acceptable)

We seek here demonstrable and persuasive evidence that the supervisory arrangements offer the applicant the best training environment possible. Your response should cover the following questions, and may be in one block of text or bullet points.

1. *Why is this the right supervisory team and research environment for this project and this researcher and what role will each supervisor play in supporting the doctoral researcher?*
2. *What will the student/project add to the research environment?*
3. *How will the supervision be managed and sustained?*

Confirmation of Training Plans

Please indicate below that you have discussed and agreed to the training plan included in the candidate's application form.

☐ I confirm that the applicant's training plan has been discussed and approved by the supervisory team.

Ethics and Research Integrity
Please indicate below that you have discussed with the applicant any ethical or safety issues attached to this research project and/or its impact plans and how these will be addressed. The applicant should provide a full outline of ethical considerations in their application.

☐ I confirm that discussion of ethics and research integrity has taken place with applicant in developing their application

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Confirmation of supervisory requirements

☐ One member of the proposed supervisory team has previously supervised at least one doctoral candidate to successful completion*.*

☐ Each member of the supervisory team has completed, within the last 5 years, the Institution for Academic Development online training Fundamentals of Supervision

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Data sharing and storage: Anonymised, limited special characteristic data from applicants (such as disability, ethnicity, and other health data) will be collected and retained by HEI in order to fulfil our contractual obligations to our funder, the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Applications from applicants not in receipt of funding will be destroyed by 1st October 2026. Applications from nominees in receipt of funding will be retained for the duration of the studentship.

Applicants are asked to consent to the sharing of aggregated anonymised Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) information with the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH)/DLA Hub to enable them to identify inequality gaps, inform strategic planning and to create an inclusive research environment. This data will not be used to identify individuals.

Applicants are asked to consent to the sharing of individual details, including title, email address, and research summary, with the SGSAH/DLA Hub. This information will be used to help deliver essential services and comply with funding requirements including delivery of training, network building, and showcasing doctoral research.

12. Assessment criteria for 2026

The majority of applications are of fundable quality and the competition is intense. We have developed a set of criteria to help us to make difficult decisions in a transparent way.

In essence, the questions we ask are:

- Why this applicant?
- Why this research project?
- Why this supervisory team?

Marks are organised into broad bands A-D. Reviewers are asked to allocate precise marks within each band. The total marks available are 50.

Qualifications OR Relevant Professional Experience

Band	Mark	Qualifications description*	Relevant Professional Experience description
A	6	A first-class degree with evidence of high marks maintained across the programme or exit velocity as demonstrated by increasing marks in undergraduate transcripts *and* dissertation or equivalent awarded a first-class mark. **OR** a Masters level distinction with a dissertation mark of 70% first class/A grade or equivalent **OR** clear evidence of excellence in the dissertation/independent research element of an unclassified postgraduate research degree (e.g. MPhil), e.g. comment from external examiner or dissertation of publishable quality, set out in the candidate's application and corroborated by a reference letter provided with the application for a University place	A compelling case that relevant professional experience is **at least equal to** the completion of a Masters degree with distinction, including strong evidence of independent research thinking and excellent quality output
B	5	A first-class degree **OR** a Masters level distinction	A strong case is made including evidence of independent research thinking and high-quality output

		OR clear evidence in the of a high standard of achievement in the dissertation/independent research element of an unclassified postgraduate research degree (e.g. MPhil), e.g. dissertation of near-publishable quality, set out in the candidate's application and corroborated by a reference letter provided with the application for a University place	
C	4	Masters with merit	A good case is made that relevant professional experience is **at least equal to** the completion of a Masters degree but is not compelling. For instance: evidence is available of research thinking but the level of independence is unclear; evidence is available for output, but the quality is not excellent.
D	1	Masters at pass (overall mark 50-59% or equivalent) **OR** Undergraduate degree at 2:1	A case is made that relevant professional experience is **at least equal to** the completion of a Masters degree but is not strong. This might include a lack of evidence of independent research thinking and poor-quality output, for example.
* Where the qualification is non-standard or unclassified, your application for a University place and/or Supervisory Statement will provide further information for review purposes.			

Quality of Research Proposal, Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement, and Impact (including Academic Impact)

Band	Mark	Description
A	14 13 12	An exceptional proposal in all of its components. Research questions are clear/cogent, and the proposal demonstrates a comprehensive awareness of the research context and the contribution that the project will make to the field. A clear gap in existing knowledge has been identified and a compelling case

Band	Mark	Description
		made for the significance of addressing this gap. The proposal is original and innovative, the methods are appropriate, and the project is feasible within the timescale of 3.5-4 years. An entirely persuasive case has been made for the potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/or impact (including academic impact) with demonstrably feasible plans for delivery within the timescales. Any ethical/safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. The proposal is compelling.
B	11 10 9	A strong proposal with clear and cogent research questions and a sense of the contribution that the research will make, combined with appropriate methods. The research is likely to be feasible within the timescale of 3.5-4 years. There is a good case for the potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/or impact (including academic impact) together with a realistic delivery plan. Any ethical/safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. A good case is made for the proposal.
C	8 7 6	A solid proposal with researchable questions, appropriately identified sources and an appropriate methodology. There is some awareness of its intellectual importance. The research may be feasible within the period of supervised study. There will be indications of awareness of the potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/ or impact activity (including academic impact) but the proposal may lack realistic plans for implementation. Any ethical/safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed.
D	5 4 3	A proposal with serious shortcomings in one or more of its aspects.

Preparedness for research

Band	Mark	Description
A	10 9	Evidence that the applicant is **exceptionally well-prepared** for **their proposed research** and **for PhD level of study** through either: Previous highly relevant study (e.g.: the relevance of undergraduate and Masters' programme and dissertation topics; specific advanced methodological or skills training; proficiency in required language or technical skills; relevant employment-related or work-based learning experience etc.); **or** Previous highly relevant professional experience (e.g. significant employment in a highly relevant field with equivalence to Masters' study; specific methodological training and/or experience etc.); **and** The training requirements identified demonstrate convincingly that the candidate has an excellent sense of what is required to enable

Band	Mark	Description
		them to complete the project successfully and has identified training available, making excellent use of the SGSAH Hub.
B	8 7 6	Evidence that the applicant is **well-prepared** for **their proposed research** and **for PhD level of study** through either: Previous related study (e.g.: the relevance of a UG programme and Masters' dissertation topic; specific methodological or skills training); **or** Relevant professional experience (e.g. employment in a relevant field with equivalence to Masters' study; specific methodological training and/or experience); **and** The training requirements identified indicate that the candidate has a reasonable idea of what is required to enable them to complete the project successfully and has identified some training available, making good use of their membership of the SGSAH Hub.
C	5 4 3	Evidence that the applicant is prepared for **their proposed research** and **for PhD level of study** through either: Previous related study but somewhat limited in scope (e.g.: the relevance of an undergraduate or Masters dissertation; some competency in appropriate methodological or skills training and/or experience). **or** Some relevant professional experience but limited in scope or duration (e.g. employment in a relevant field with equivalence to Masters' study.) **and** The training requirements identified indicate that the candidate has partially considered the training required to enable them to complete the project successfully and has given some indication of familiarisation with the resources and opportunities provided by being a member of the SGSAH Hub.
D	2 1	No evidence that the applicant is prepared for their proposed research and for PhD level of study (e.g. there is no relevance of UG/Masters programmes to the proposed project) **or** No relevant professional experience **and** Little indication of familiarisation with the resources and opportunities provided by being a member of the SGSAH Hub.

Individual Training Plan (ITP) and Engagement with the Hub/University Training

Band	Mark	Description

Band	Mark	Description
A	10 9	Compelling evidence that the specific needs of the applicant have been considered carefully, that the training needs identified are appropriate and relevant and that the student will be exceptionally well supported. It is highly likely that the project will be successfully completed within the funded period. There is clear evidence that the future career aspirations of the applicant have been considered that appropriate opportunities/resources have been identified, making excellent use of the resources available across the University of Edinburgh and the SGSAH Hub. The overall plan is clear and realistic and offers outstanding PhD training for the applicant.
B	8 7 6	There is strong evidence that the specific needs of the nominated applicant have been considered and that the training needs identified are appropriate and relevant. It is likely that the project will be successfully completed within the funded period. There is good evidence that the future career aspirations of the applicant have been considered, and that appropriate opportunities/ resources have been identified.
C	5 4 3	There is some sense that the specific needs of the nominated applicant have been considered though the development opportunities are limited.
D	2 1	The training plan is entirely generic. Insufficient attention has been paid to specific training and skills development needs and how these will be met.

a. Supervisory Expertise and Research Environment

Band	Mark	Description
A	10 9	Supervision arrangements represent an optimal fit with the nominated student and their proposed research. The supervisory team, in its totality, provides this student with the best possible support available, and is internationally excellent. The supervisory team is likely to offer complementary areas of expertise, at the level of knowledge/discipline, methodologies, and other appropriate skills (e.g. impact and KE experience), demonstrating the ability to develop the doctoral researcher's skills and professional competence. All members of the supervisory team are active researchers, demonstrating significant and ongoing expertise in the required field(s), as appropriate to their career stage. The research environment offered to the applicant is demonstrably excellent in all of its components. Resources available at the HEI are essential to the successful completion of the PhD and will add value to the overall doctoral experience – e.g. specialist libraries, collections, spaces or

		equipment – and the nominated applicant will be able to access the resources. The research fits well with the expertise and/or priorities and/or research clusters of the supervising HEI. There is demonstrable 'added value' for the student being co-supervised by this supervisory team and particular HEI and vice versa.
B	8 7 6	Supervision arrangements represent a strong fit with the proposed research. There is a strong research environment, with the supervisory team able to offer good support, and the environment providing access to necessary research resources. There is evidence of existing or emerging capacity in the proposed research area.
C	5 4 3	Supervision arrangements are adequate, with supervisors having some experience in the subject area but there are some questions about the fit between the full supervisory team and proposed research. There is adequate fit between the resource needs of the project and the research environment.
D	2 1	There are some strengths but there are also clear weaknesses in terms of supervisory fit and research environment. The supervisory team does not fulfil the supervisory training requirements in all of its components.