

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

AHRC Doctoral Focal Awards Funding Opportunity

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1	January 2024	Content is based on questions asked during a live webinar held on the 5 th December 2023.
2	March 2024	Content has been updated to reflect new questions asked during a live webinar held on the 28 th February 2024, as follows: Page 6 – question number 2.XX . Page 9 - question number 2.XXXIV . Page 10 – question number 2.XXXV. , 3.II. and 3.III . Page 19 – question number 6.X . Page 20 – question number 7.V . Page 22 – question number 8.III . Page 25 – question number 9.V .

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1. Introduction

This document covers aspects of the funding opportunity but does not duplicate content from the funding opportunity. Please see [the full funding opportunity](#) and the FAQs before you approach the AHRC for advice.

Q. Focal awards funding and studentships

2.I.

Question (Q). How many focal awards will AHRC be awarding?

Answer (A). The number of awards in the current funding round will be dependent on the number of studentships requested by the applicants. AHRC expects to make up to five awards per theme, so up to 10 awards across the two themes, but the final figure may be different.

2.II.

Q. Will there be 5-6 awards in total, or in each of these two themes?

A. The number of awards will be dependent on the number of studentships requested by the applicants. AHRC expects to make up to five awards per theme, so up to 10 in total, but the final figure may be different.

2.III.

Q. How might the potential wider UKRI co-funding work? Would that increase number of studentships, or be about how many consortia holding focal awards can be funded?

A. Both options could be considered. AHRC is unable to provide more information at this stage.

2.IV.

Q. How many studentships per consortium per year might we anticipate?

A. Maximum 9 per year in the ratio of 9 in the first year, 9 in the second, 6 in the third and 6 in the fourth, so max 30 in total throughout the lifetime of the award.

2.V.

Q. How will studentships be distributed among partners, or is that up to the individual consortia?

A. The distribution of studentships between partners within consortia will be up to the consortia to determine. We will need assurance in the application that any distribution of awards will be open, fair, and transparent for any potential students.

2.VI.

Q. There was mention of 5-6 Focal Awards, but also that more may be advertised in future. Since there are currently 10 DTPs under the AHRC umbrella, does this mean we need to build bigger consortia than currently exist? Or, will the final number of focal awards be approximately 10?

A. AHRC isn't providing any guidance on consortia size, apart from the restriction that every focal award must include at least two HEIs and at least one partner beyond academia. The size and composition of the consortium should be driven by the vision and aim of the focal award proposed. We expect to fund up to 5 focal awards per theme in the current funding call, and future calls are planned.

2.VII.

Q. Will this opportunity repeated again in the future and are themes known – for those looking at timelines and trying to weigh up applying for this or a later call?

A. This opportunity is part of AHRC's future doctoral provision programme. We expect another round in the future, but AHRC have not yet outlined and agreed a specific timeline for the next AHRC Doctoral Focal Award funding opportunity. You are welcome to join the community consultation by submitting an idea for a doctoral focal award theme using our [Where Next questionnaire](#). Please refer to the [UKRI Funding Finder](#) for future opportunities.

2.VIII.

Q. Will opportunities for focal awards happen on an annual basis at a similar level of investment? Is there a commissioning framework for the themes?

A. This opportunity is part of AHRC's future doctoral provision programme. We expect another round in the future, but AHRC have not yet outlined and agreed a specific timeline for the next AHRC Doctoral Focal Award funding opportunity. There is no commissioning framework, however our intention is to engage the community for any future round. You are welcome to join the community consultation by submitting an idea for a doctoral focal award theme using our [Where Next questionnaire](#). Please refer to the UKRI Funding Finder for future opportunities.

2.IX.

Q. Can the studentships be top-sliced for creating more cohort development funds and support high cost areas etc? Or do they need to be 4 years?

A. This opportunity is for four cohorts of studentships for four years each. AHRC is in the process of considering what flexibility might be provided within these awards but would recommend your starting point is that all studentships would be four years' duration. Additional funding will be provided for cohort development as part of the award.

2.X.

Q. Can you give a rough estimate of how much the cohort development should cost, either across the award, or on a per student basis?

A. The estimate per award depends on the number of studentships requested. Applicants can request between 20 and 30 studentships over the lifetime of the award and the ratio of new starters across the four years needs to be 3:3:2:2. For example, that may be 9 students in the first cohort, 9 in the next year, and then 6 in each of the remaining cohorts. AHRC will fund up to £1200 for cohort activities per student per year. However, the Focal award shouldn't manage these funds on a per student basis as this funding is for cohort activity. Each application must include a resources justification form. Please refer to the UKRI Funding Finder for details: [Doctoral focal awards in the arts and humanities – UKRI](#)

2.XI.

Q. When would successful applicants expect to start receiving funding from? How is the funding awarded in terms of timeline over the project?

A. The first cohort of students will begin in October 2026 and AHRC will align the first payment with this cohort. Four student cohorts will be supported, and funding will be provided on the basis of four-year studentships.

2.XII.

Q. How much financial contribution would you expect from HEIs?

A. AHRC welcomes co-funding from HEIs but doesn't expect a specific sum or percentage. The proposed contribution, if any, will not be part of the assessment process. However, please note that we do not provide funding for the administrative costs of setting up and delivering the training grant. Award holders will be expected to provide this, and assessors will want to see some assurance that these costs will be provided to enable the smooth running of the award.

2.XIII.

Q. Are PhD stipends at home rates only or will you cover international student rates? Would you expect HEIs/partners to provide some 'top ups' to cover international fees?

A. AHRC will only pay the PhD stipends at home rates, not international student rates. It would be possible for HEIs/partners to help support their students in topping up their fees if required. According to UKRI Training Grant T&Cs Guidance 4.: "For International Students, you are able to claim the difference between home and International fees from other sources, but these must not be taken from the Training Grant or other UKRI funding. These sources may include an HEI contribution, co-funder contribution or from the student directly. Institutions can also choose to waive the additional fees".

2.XIV.

Q. Following on from home / international rates. Can the partner organisation top up the international fees?

A. Yes, that would be possible. According to UKRI Training Grant T&Cs Guidance 4.: "For International Students, you are able to claim the difference between home and International fees from other sources, but these must not be taken from the Training Grant or other UKRI funding. These sources may include an HEI contribution, co-funder contribution or from the student directly. Institutions can also choose to waive the additional fees".

2.XV.

Q. We wish to include international studentships in our application with our global partnerships (in the global south), is this something of interest to AHRC? We understand AHRC do not cover international fees/stipends but our organisation would cover these and that would add to the numbers of the cohort.

A. AHRC would very much support this in the scope of the call to promote and help diversity of students. However, the fees that AHRC cover are domestic fees and so international students would not qualify. If consortia are willing and able to cover the international fees then you are welcome to include international studentships in your application.

2.XVI.

Q. UKRI fund health surcharge costs for international postdocs on grants. Is there scope

for UKRI to cover such costs for PGR students? Increasing visa costs and surcharge costs may be prohibitive for international applicants and HEIs cannot take on more costs, given that they are already covering the difference in Home/international fees

A. Visa costs for international students coming to study in the UK are not an allowable cost under the UKRI standard terms and conditions of training grants. This includes the Immigration Health Surcharge.

Visa costs are a known issue for the sector and we are monitoring the landscape to understand and improve evidence on barriers and issues for international researchers and PGR students.

We are currently actively building evidence to understand how much of a barrier visa costs are to the attraction and retention of international PGR students, so we can understand the scale of the issue which will enable us to effectively focus our policy work on the correct areas of concern and also balance the issue with other pressing mobility priorities for the sector.

2.XVII.

Q. Does the 4 years of a funded PhD include the writing up year?

A. The four-year period is to enable students to undertake development opportunities and be supported up to thesis submission. This moves away from an unfunded 'writing up' year. This is in line with [UKRI's Training Grant Guidance](#): TGC 5 (Mode and duration of studentship): 'Councils expect doctoral projects to be designed and supervised in such a way that Students are able to submit their thesis within the funded period, as defined at the outset of the project'.

2.XVIII.

Q. Is there a direct requirement to recruit a certain number of international students?

A. No, there isn't a requirement to recruit a certain number of international students. International students must be eligible to apply to the AHRC Focal Award scheme studentships but award holders should note that the standard UKRI cap on the proportion of international students appointed each year (30% of the total) applies to AHRC focal awards. See UKRI guidance: [EU and international eligibility for UKRI studentships from 2021 – UKRI](#).

2.XIX.

Q. Will the focal training grant awards include additional stipend for collaborative doctoral awards?

A. We strongly encourage Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA) as part of the offer. These are doctoral research projects which are collaboratively and equitably developed and delivered by a HEI and non-HEI partner, align with the non-HEI partner's area of activity, and have impacts beyond academia, including the not-for-profit third sector. They are student career focussed, with the student spending up to half their time in the non-HEI organisation and benefitting from the support of two supervisors – one within and one beyond academia. We will provide additional stipend for these students and funding is available to support one or two CDA awards per cohort (subject to demand). You can support more CDAs through co-funding, which is also encouraged. Please indicate in your application if your consortium wishes to support CDA awards and, if so, how many per cohort. There is a separate resources form within the Funding

Finder to download, complete and upload alongside your application, and CDAs should be captured there.

2.XX.

Q. If an IRO is a Co-Lead, would they be limited to working with HEIs in the consortium for individual CDAs, or would they have the option of seeking co-supervisors from anywhere for CDAs that they lead on (as they do for CDP studentships, where they hold them)?

A. AHRC would expect connections to stay within the consortium and that the universities that are members of the consortium would be the partners for the CDAs.

2.XXI.

Q. How much is the additional stipend for the Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)?

A. AHRC will calculate the stipend amount at the point of making awards. Please see the resources justification form, which is complementary to the application form. AHRC funding is available to support one or two CDA awards per cohort (subject to demand).

2.XXII.

Q. Is the number of CDAs per year in addition to 20-30 'regular' studentships or included within it?

A. The number of CDAs per year will need to be included within the overall number of studentships you are requesting.

2.XXIII.

Q. If consortia bid for the max number of awards (30), will the funder offer to support smaller numbers of student cohort? Or will be applications be all or nothing?

A. Every applicant can apply for the max of 30 studentships over 4 cohorts. This needs to be in the ratio of 3:3:2:2 (so up to 9 students in the first two cohorts and up to 6 in the latter two). AHRC reserves the right to award fewer studentships than the maximum number requested. We would encourage applicants to ensure that the number of students requested is justified in the application and in line with the vision and aims of their proposal.

2.XXIV.

Q. If the collaborative doctoral awards will form a proportion of the total studentships applied for, does the AHRC have any guidance on what sort of proportion?

A. You can apply for up to two per cohort from AHRC funding, so max eight studentships within a max of 30. However, you can indicate more than two if your consortium is able to provide the additional funding for more CDA students.

2.XXV.

Q. Are CDAs a necessary requirement for every application?

A. No, CDAs are strongly encouraged, but are optional for applicants to request.

2.XXVI.

Q. Will the training grant awards include funds for activities to train and develop the whole cohort of students at my proposed training grant?

A. Funding for cohort-based training and development will be provided. This will be calculated by AHRC as a set cost, based on the number of studentship awards. To enable you to develop your provision, and to include a justification in the resources section of your application, please multiply the number of studentships you are applying for by £1,200 per year to give you an estimate of the cohort funding that will be provided. Please note, this funding is for cohort activity and should not be allocated on a per student basis if the application is successful. There is a separate resources form within the Funding Finder to download, complete and upload alongside your application, and proposed cohort activities and their estimated cost should be captured there.

2.XXVII.

Q. In our conversations with potential partners, the question has arisen of exactly who the doctoral training would be for. Is it to be provided only for the c. 9 doctoral students on the scholarship scheme each year, or is it envisaged that the training would be open on a self-selecting basis to other students in the institution?

A. AHRC will only fund the stipend, fees and additional costs for a maximum of 30 students across the lifetime of the award. There will be no allocation of funding that can be used to expand the training to include further students. However, if you use the funding to deliver training that is provided to the AHRC-funded students in the scheme and choose to open this up to other students, then AHRC would welcome this. We very much support offering training opportunities to a wider and more diverse cohort, however, any associated costs would not be covered by AHRC.

2.XXVIII.

Q. When you referenced activities having to be available for all students in a cohort, will it be seen as a disadvantage if these are online activities (given the logistics of being on different islands, for example)?

A. It won't be seen as a disadvantage, provided that the offer meets the other requirements outlined in the Funding Opportunity. We encourage a range of formats: in person, completely online, and hybrid, to enable accessibility.

2.XXIX.

Q. Is the £1,200 per student for cohort funding limited to £1,200 x 20-30 AHRC studentships, or will there be funding for co-funded studentships?

A. This funding will be calculated on the basis of AHRC funded students.

2.XXX.

Q. What can I spend the cohort funding on, and are there any restrictions?

A. The purpose of cohort funding is to support innovative training and development activities for the wider cohort of AHRC-funded students. AHRC has not provided a list of eligible and non-eligible uses for the cohort-based training and development funding in order to allow consortia the freedom to address the needs of their distinctive cohorts. Please note:

- These activities should be accessible to the entire cohort of AHRC funded students.
- In some cases, subject-specific activities may be provided, but these should be open to all eligible students.
- The funding may be used to cover the travel costs of AHRC funded students travelling to cohort events.
- The funding can't be used to support any existing infrastructure, to reimburse the costs of university or partner staff resources such as travel and subsistence, or to be used to support activities that would normally be supported by universities. Further, these costs cannot be used to support costs of administration, for example staff costs to run the cohort programme.
- You are welcome to open activities funded through this cohort allocation to other AHRC-funded students or the wider community of arts and humanities students within a consortium or HEI, provided that students supported through the training grant have priority.

2.XXXI.

Q. Does the Doctoral Focal Award scheme provide funding for any of the following:

- **Supervision time**
- **Administrative costs**
- **Project management**

Q. Leadership/Project Lead time

A. Information about what the AHRC funding will cover is available on [UKRI Funding Finder](#) under 'What we're looking for'. As stated there, '*We do not provide funding for administrative costs of setting up and delivering the training grant*' which unfortunately means that project management and project lead time won't be funded. The exception is the additional funding from AHRC World Class Labs for bringing together all small specialist institutions funded through this opportunity (please see the question-and-answer number **2. XXXIV** on page 9 of this FAQ document for details). Supervision time also isn't covered by the funding. AHRC expects consortia members to contribute this in-kind.

2.XXXII.

Q. Does AHRC allow participation and/or partner funding of HEI and non-HEI consortia members based abroad?

A. AHRC does welcome international non-academic partners as well as international HEIs as consortia members, but they cannot be leads or co-leads. Application leads and co-leads must be based in the UK. International partnerships, for example to host student placements or provide other cohort or individual opportunities, are encouraged within the focal awards consortia. Match-funding received by the focal award consortia from HEI or non-HEI partners based abroad is welcome. However, these partners can't receive any of the AHRC award funding.

2.XXXIII.

Q. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the call, some of the potential PhD research projects could involve lab-based work or fieldwork (not cohort-based training). Are you providing any funding to cover these costs?

A. There is no specific provision for laboratory or fieldwork costs. The support for individual training and development activity for students within the AHRC award can be used to cover costs of fieldwork and laboratory work and associated training, among other eligible individual development activities. There will be other demands on this funding which you will need to consider in determining how this funding might be used for each student.

It is expected that all students will engage with cohort-based training, irrespective of the research focus for their project. Please note that AHRC's allocation for cohort training can't be used to support laboratory work or fieldwork related to individual studentship research projects. However, a group training session relevant to and open to the entire cohort, focusing on, for example, technical skills required for operating specific facilities in a laboratory environment, or good practice in fieldwork, would be eligible.

2.XXXIV.

Q. Administrative costs are not eligible, but AHRC also encourage applications from small specialist institutions. Does AHRC offer any targeted funding for small specialist institutions applying for the focal awards funding opportunity? Those institutions often face the barrier of limited administrative resource due to their size.

A. AHRC appreciates that small specialist institutions may have less administrative capacity. These awards are for consortia, and it is anticipated that, collectively, members would contribute to administrative support which might avoid placing undue burden on specialist institutions or putting them in a disadvantaged position.

As announced at a webinar on 28th February 2024, additional funding of £300,000 to £500,000 per annum will also be made available for one or two of the successful Focal Awards led by small specialist institutions (SSIs). This is to support:

- Development of an 'SSI doctoral research community' which will bring together all SSIs funded through the AHRC focal awards. This will be a community of students and those who support them e.g. supervisors and support staff. The funding is to enable creation of this community and might be used, for example, for networking and engagement events in line with the community's needs.
- Design, development and delivery of a programme of student-led activities to facilitate the sharing of good practice, skills, knowledge and research between SSIs. The programme will be tailored to meet the SSI student needs and complement the cohort activities included within individual focal awards. Given the overlap between the cohort activity provision within the focal award and SSI doctoral research community programme, the administrative costs provided can be used to cover both activities
- Design and development of resources, materials and activities to build understanding of SSI-led research practices (across all career levels) and the contribution of SSIs to research, innovation and the wider economy. This will be a separate project which will go beyond doctoral research and training.

This additional uplift is to fulfil AHRC's ambition to tangibly support small specialist institutions as a key constituent of the arts and humanities community that are acknowledged as world-leading, but have historically felt unable to lead on doctoral training grants because of resource and other constraints.

The funding for the 'SSI doctoral research community' awards comes from the AHRC World Class Labs allocation and will only be made to SSI-led consortia whose applications are deemed fundable by Peer Review and Moderation Panel.

Once the focal award funding decisions have been made, AHRC will contact successful SSIs with more detail on the level of funding and the process for allocating this additional support.

2.XXXV.

Q. Are any project lead or co-lead salaries eligible costs?

A. Information about what the AHRC funding will cover is available on [UKRI Funding Finder](#) under 'What we're looking for'. As stated there, '*We do not provide funding for administrative costs of setting up and delivering the training grant*' which unfortunately means that the salary of Project Leads and Co-Leads would not be considered eligible costs. AHRC would expect these to be covered by the research organisations.

3. Individual eligibility (lead, co-lead, teams, narrative CV)

3.I.

Q. Do you expect the project lead/lead applicant to have a demonstrable track record in postgraduate provision, or just the lead organisation more broadly?

A. There must be evidence that you and your team have 'relevant experience in delivering postgraduate training programmes by either the project lead or the project co-lead.' This means specifically doctoral training programmes. This expertise must be present either within the project lead's or co-lead's background. See the criteria on UKRI Funding Finder [Doctoral focal awards in the arts and humanities – UKRI](#)

3.II.

Q. Is there an expectation that the named project lead hold research expertise, or can that role be held by someone in an administrative role, provided that research expertise is held by others in the team?

A. There is an expectation that expertise is evidence within the team, ideally by a project lead or co-lead. However, as long as there is evidence of research expertise within the consortium, someone in an administrative role e.g. with research management or development experience, could be named project lead.

3.III.

Q. On the point 'A track record of involvement in postgraduate provision from the lead or the co-lead(s) is essential': would a track record of Masters-level provision tick this box

(for a co-lead institution), or would a history of doctoral provision be essential?

A. In the case of focal awards, some track record or engagement with doctoral provision or support is desired. Masters-level support is valuable, but a history of doctoral provision somewhere in the consortium is essential.

3.IV.

Q. Is a co-lead the person at the HEI or non-HEI institution who leads that institution's involvement in the application?

A. The co-lead can be at a HEI or eligible non-HEI institution as the person who leads that institution's involvement and is listed in the application form as co-leading the proposal. The co-lead is required to have an active role in running the award.

3.V.

Q. Is my institution eligible to submit an application as a lead institution it does not have research degree awarding powers?

A. Specialist higher education providers without research degree awarding powers are eligible to lead an AHRC doctoral focal award application as long as there is another member of their consortium who does have research degree-awarding powers.

3.VI.

Q. What criteria must be met for co-leads?

Project co-leads must be from organisations eligible for UKRI funding, as per [the AHRC Research Funding Guide](#). This includes independent research organisations. They also must evidence they have the skills needed to co-lead a doctoral training grant. See the full criteria on UKRI Funding Finder [Doctoral focal awards in the arts and humanities – UKRI](#)

3.VII.

Q. Is there a distinction between co-leads, who are effectively co-investigators and co-create the bid; and other partners, who act as partners in the traditional sense?

A. There is a distinction between the term 'partner' and 'co-lead' as co-leads must come from organisations eligible for UKRI funding and have an active role in running the award during its entire lifetime. Partners are defined as *'a collaborating organisation beyond academia which will have an integral role in the proposed doctoral training and development'* (as per the funding opportunity on [UKRI Funding Finder](#)). Staff from organisations which are not eligible to be co-leads can be classed as partners. We are anticipating that partner engagement would be flexible in both duration and their role, and the eligibility for UKRI funding requirement doesn't apply to the non-academic partners.

3.VIII.

Q. Can one of the co-leads be within the same institution as the project lead, and lend additional support?

A. Yes, it is possible to have a lead and a co-lead at the same HEI, provided that at least one more HEI is involved in the application and in the training grant. Eligibility requirements for the

lead applicant are available in the funding opportunity under 'Who is eligible to apply' and 'How to apply - capability to deliver' on [UKRI Funding Finder](#).

3.IX.

Q: Within a co-leading organisation, could you have two staff members becoming co-leads?

A: Yes, AHRC allows multiple co-leads to be based at the same Research Organization or Independent Research Organisation. This may be a role-sharing arrangement or two consecutive co-leads, for example. We encourage diverse consortia and acknowledge there is a range of ways of co-leading them, that suit diverse needs. All co-leads should be included in the narrative CV part of the application, as per our instructions for applicants on the UKRI Funding Service. You can only list one individual as a project lead on TFS but you can list multiple co-leads.

3.X.

Q. May an institution be the lead on an application to each strand?

A. No, only one application as the lead is allowed for this round of Focal Awards.

3.XI.

Q. Can a project lead be involved in other projects in a different capacity?

A. Yes, project leads may participate in any number of applications as a co-lead or a representative of a partner organisation. They would have to demonstrate that they have sufficient capacity to meet the requirements of the roles, should all the applications be successful.

3.XII.

Q. Is there a limit on the number of applications a HEI can be a part of as a co-lead?

A. There is no limit on the number of applications HEIs may participate in as a consortium member.

3.XIII.

Q. Can an institution submit more than one application with a different lead applicant?

A. No, an institution is not allowed to submit more than one application, even with a different lead applicant. A HEI can be a part of more than one application, provided that they are the lead applicant on only one of these, and a co-lead or consortium member without a leading function on the other application(s).

3.XIV.

Q. Is it possible to include international partners either HEIs or non-academic within a consortium?

A. International partnerships, for example to host student placements, are encouraged within the focal awards consortia. However, international partners cannot be hosts for CDAs under this scheme.

3.XV.

Q. How to submit CV information? I'm applying with a team so do you need their separate CVs?

A. We are using the Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) format and headings in the application form on the Funding Service. Teams should submit a single R4RI (not individual r4RIs for each team member) when applying to a funding opportunity. The team R4RI should describe only a selection of their past contributions that best evidence their ability to carry out the proposed project. The educational and professional background, experience and skills of the project lead, co-lead and any other team member should be described in the same section of the application form. Only one R4RI should be submitted even for large teams across multiple organisations. See [guidance on R4RI narrative CV format](#) on the UKRI website.

3.XVI.

Q. Will the word limit for the R4RI still be 1000 words? I imagine these teams will be large and it is pretty much impossible to cover everyone's experience in any meaningful way in so few words.

A. It's 2000 words in this case so double the limit to account for team members but we also encourage brevity and highlighting experience most relevant to coordinating a training grant consortium.

3.XVII.

Q. What size must my consortium be?

A. The minimum is two research organisations plus at least one partner beyond academia. AHRC doesn't set the maximum size of a consortium. You are expected to justify the involvement of all members of the consortium (that is, co-lead organisations and project partners) in your application, set out a clear governance structure, and provide written evidence of support of all the involved parties as per the Funding Service application form guidance.

3.XVIII.

Q. What does AHRC mean by 'diverse consortia'?

A. AHRC defines this as consortia which include a range of types of higher education institutions (for example post-92, small specialist institutions and Russell Group institutions), working together with a range of non-academic partners from different sectors of the economy and of a different scale, appropriate to the theme. We don't expect consortia to cover the whole range of potential options. Collaborations and partnerships need to be appropriate to deliver the vision and aims of the proposed award.

3.XIX.

Q. Can I involve other higher education institutions I have already worked with in my application, or do these HEI consortia members relationships have to be brand new?

A: Both pre-existing and new HEI collaborations are encouraged and welcome.

3.XX.

Q. Can HEIs include their university galleries, museums, libraries and archives as CDA partners for co-supervision of collaborative studentship projects (CDAs) within their focal awards consortia?

A. Yes, but only up to 50% of CDAs at a given consortium may be in collaboration with a GLAM organisation at the same university.

3.XXI.

Q. What level of support are partners expected to provide?

A. In-kind support from HEI and non-HEI partners is mandatory. Financial contributions are welcome but optional.

3.XXII.

Q. When you said that the partnership must be evident at both the level of governance and individual studentships, does that mean that each individual doctoral project should involve both cross-institutional supervision and be collaborative (i.e. involve non-academic supervisors), or just one?

A. There is no AHRC requirement for students to have more than one supervisor, except for Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs) projects, which do need a supervisor in the university and the non-academic organisation. Projects with more than one supervisor might be included for interdisciplinary projects or to facilitate cross-institutional engagements, these might be considered on a case-by-case basis, or it would be possible for the Focal award to set an expectation for all studentships if that fits the vision for the award.

Training grant awards must involve collaboration between academia and organisations beyond academia and this may take various forms. At the individual student level, it could be CDAs or placements with non-academic organisations, or more informal engagements which provide students with experience of different sectors. At the Training Grant level, it might involve non-academic participation in governance or cohort activities etc.

3.XXIII.

Q. Can co-leads and other members of the project team, and my Research Office colleagues, edit the 'work in progress' application on the Funding Service before it is submitted?

A: Only the project lead and Research Office can edit the application on the Funding Service.

3.XXIV.

Q. Can I include the cost of hiring a coordinator/administrator/manager to join my focal award team in my application?

A. The salary of a training coordination would fall into the category of administrative costs. Administrative costs, as per [the call specification on UKRI Funding Finder](#), aren't eligible to be included in applications and claimed on the grants. However, if you are a small specialist institution, please see question number **2. XXXIV** on page **9** for additional information. This exception aside, AHRC expects that costs such as administrative/managerial staff salary will be covered by the relevant research organisations as in-kind contribution to the focal awards.

4. Organisational eligibility

4.I.

Q. Do all institutions/non-academic organisation need to be within the UK?

A. Project leads and co-leads must be based in the UK. AHRC welcomes international non-academic partners and HEIs who are consortia members, but they cannot be leads or co-leads.

4.II.

Q. Are organisations currently in receipt of AHRC funding for doctoral training through the DTP, CDT or CDP schemes eligible to apply?

A. Yes, current AHRC training grant award holders, past AHRC training grant award holders, as well as HEIs which have never had AHRC training grant funding are all eligible. Current award holders will be judged on merit like all applicants.

4.III.

Q. Are organisations currently in receipt of funding for doctoral training from other research councils and/or other funders eligible to apply?

A. Yes, if they fulfil the eligibility criteria as per the UKRI Funding Finder opportunity and propose a training grant consortium with sufficient arts and humanities focus.

4.IV.

Q. Are organisations which have never had AHRC funding for doctoral training through the Block Grant Partnerships (BGP), Doctoral Training Partnerships, Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) or Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships schemes eligible to apply?

A. Yes. HEIs which have never had AHRC training grant funding are eligible, provided they meet the overall eligibility criteria for the funding opportunity.

4.V.

Q. If you hold an award in the first round of focal studentship funding, can you also lead an application in round 2?

A: We have not yet considered this and will make a decision when we develop the specification for the next round.

4.VI.

Q. What constitutes a 'small specialist institution'?

A. AHRC is requiring institutions to self-classify in the application. Please add such self-classification to your Higher Education Institution letter of support on our application system, if applicable.

The Funding Opportunity text has been updated with more information for small specialist institutions and we recommend that you re-visit the text.

5. Non-academic partners

5.I.

Q. Are non-HEI partner(s) who join the consortium only eligible to be co-leads if they are eligible to apply for AHRC funding?

A. Yes, organisations need to be eligible for AHRC funding to be named as co-lead. Partner organisations/project partners and co-leads are two different categories. Co-leads must be from organisations which are eligible for UKRI funding, as per the [AHRC Research Funding Guide](#). Partners don't have to be eligible for UKRI funding. They can be organisations from any sector, as outlined in the [UKRI Funding Finder opportunity](#). We expect partners to be contributing to the student training and development and involved in studentship projects and this can be in a range of different ways. We strongly encourage applicants to involve partners beyond academia as early as possible and in co-creating the application.

5.II.

Q. If a non-academic institution, e.g. museum, is an independent research organisation (IRO), would they have to be a co-lead or could they be the 'partner beyond academia'?

A. They can be either. AHRC does not mandate this: it is up to the team to decide which role they have the capacity to take on. Any organisation with IRO status is eligible to be a co-lead but can also take on a role of a project partner if they decide not to co-lead an application.

5.III.

Q. May non-HEI partners which have a formal link to a university, partner with that University?

A. Yes, it would be possible for non-HEI partners which have a formal link with the university to be included. AHRC also welcomes and encourages new, equitable partnerships. Your application should outline the benefits of the partnership to all involved parties.

5.IV.

Q. Can University collections be a partner on an application led by their host HEI?

A. It is permissible for the university collection to be the partner but, ideally, they would not be the sole partner. We are seeking to support consortia of university and non-university organisations. AHRC welcomes and encourages new, equitable partnerships. Your application should outline the benefits of the partnership to all involved parties.

5.V.

Q. Can the non-HEI be a solely charitable institution that provides funds for training but not direct training or delivery?

A. Charitable organisations are welcome as partner organisations. We recognise that there are a range of factors which will determine the type and scale of a partner's engagement in the award which may be reflective of their capacity or expertise. AHRC expects a contribution from the partners, and we leave them the flexibility to decide whether it would be cash, in kind, or both, as long as it adds value to what the training grant provides for the students. It is up to the applicant to justify the value of each partnership with a non-HEI organisation.

5.VI.

Q. Can one of the non-HEI Partners in a Consortium contribute cash only to leverage the AHRC funding for studentships, i.e. not contributing towards training and student experience?

A. There is no match funding requirement, but AHRC welcomes it. Partners can decide whether to contribute cash, in kind, or both and to determine how that funding is used.

5.VII.

Q. Is it expected for partners to match fund awards? Is there any guidance on what level of financial contribution is expected?

A. In kind support from HEI and non-HEI partners is mandatory. There is no match funding requirement, but AHRC welcomes it. Consortia members have the flexibility to decide the level of any match funding they can provide. Although AHRC welcomes co-funding, we don't expect a specific sum or percentage. The financial contribution won't form part of the assessment process.

5.VIII.

Q. What is the funding expectation for project partners? Is there a base amount i.e £42,500 as in other UKRI awards?

A. We have not set any expectations about how much funding partners provide, if any. Project partners need to provide in-kind support, as a minimum, and we welcome funding. Consortia members have flexibility to establish the level of any match funding they can provide. Although AHRC welcomes co-funding, we don't expect a specific sum or percentage. The contribution will not form part of the assessment process.

5.IX.

Q. What do you think the benefits are of this scheme for partners given that in the creative sector they can often be poorly funded/low paid themselves?

A. AHRC appreciates that some creative sector organisations operate on a very tight budget, and we don't underestimate the investment required in engaging with these types of awards. However, benefits include addressing skills gaps for the future of the sector, the opportunity to form new collaborations within HEIs and non-HEIs, and an opportunity to benefit from partners' knowledge and research expertise.

6. Research themes (including questions about interdisciplinarity)

6.I.

Q. Does a bid for “A&H for a healthy planet people place” have to cover the whole of that remit? i.e. inclusive of all those rather than “or”?

A. Both themes are broad in scope and there is no expectation that any one application will cover all aspects. There must be a balance in your application and a rationale to the proposed approach to ensure it is not too narrow or too broad in scope.

6.II.

Q. To what extent should the healthy planet, people and place theme address both health humanities and environmental humanities? Can there be more focus on one of the two as long as both are addressed in some way?

A. We are interested in the interconnectedness of people, planet, and place. We want to explore the complex relationship between people and place, wellbeing, and health. There can be more emphasis on one of the two if that makes for a more coherent and well-defined proposal. There is a risk in trying to cover too much: assessors will want to see a clear vision which is achievable within the scope of the award.

6.III.

Q. Are you able to indicate future themes for these Focal Doctoral Awards?

A. AHRC are not yet able to indicate future themes for the Doctoral Focal Awards. We are currently running a community consultation to identify a theme for round two. You are welcome to submit an idea for a theme using the [AHRC Where Next questionnaire](#). This questionnaire closes on 16th April 2024.

6.IV.

Q. How broadly are you interpreting the ‘creative economy’?

A. It encompasses all disciplines that support creative industries to thrive. We are not expecting all aspects of the theme to be covered within each application, there is flexibility. The important point for applicants is to ensure the focus of their application is not too broad or too narrow.

6.V.

Q. How wide should the theme be within the doctoral focal award?

A. The themes are broad, and it is not expected that any one Focal award will cover all elements. We are looking for a coherent proposal, based on the consortia’s knowledge of the thematic area and relevant sectors, and its expertise in providing appropriate training and development for students. Each application should focus on one of the two themes whilst enabling future students’ scope to choose a research topic within the theme.

6.VI.

Q. Does our consortium have to commit collectively to either the creative economy research focus, or the healthy planet focus? The question is because anthropological work very often is about bridging these two research foci and we tend to work across networks and communities – technical innovation for example is translated into human terms. So if we commit to one, it is possible we will have to strategise on behalf of half the department, at the expense of the other half.

A. Yes, each application in this funding opportunity must focus on one of these two themes, to target skills needs through cohort activities, and address specific research challenges through the PhD projects. We recognise there is potential for overlap between the themes and do not exclude, for example, engagement of the creative sector in an application which is submitted under the Arts and humanities for a healthy planet, people and place theme. This might be the case for applications involving departments for disciplines such as anthropology which lend

themselves to exploring both topics and to interdisciplinary work. AHRC realises that for many applicants, this will require making decisions about the scope (and range of partners) in their consortium.

6.VII.

Q. Can an HEI lead a bid in both themes, or just one of these?

A. You can only submit one application as the lead applicant.

6.VIII.

Q. Can an institution be successful in two bids - one as lead and one as partner? Or would one project be disqualified in this case?

A. Yes, institutions are welcome to be involved in many consortia, however they cannot be in a leading role in more than one. The only instance where an application would be disqualified is if an institution applied as a lead applicant in more than one application.

6.IX.

Q. Can the same department submit two applications, one for each theme?

A. A university department can only submit one application for this round as lead applicant. It can be involved in any number of other applications.

6.X.

Q. You encourage 'interdisciplinary proposals' – do you mean within arts and humanities or beyond AHRC disciplines?

A. We mean both understandings of interdisciplinarity. For this funding opportunity, AHRC define interdisciplinarity as between the arts and humanities disciplines (e.g. museum studies and design), as well as between arts and humanities disciplines and those within the remits of other Research Councils (e.g. museum studies, sociology and biotechnology). Both types of interdisciplinarity are within scope and we are keen to encourage engagement beyond AHRC's remit. The potential for co-funding from other Councils would only be possible if disciplines within their remit are included in the proposal. Applications must have a minimum of 50% within AHRC's remit to be wholly funded by the AHRC.

6.XI.

Q. Interdisciplinarity is a challenge when applications go through peer review - how will you ensure interdisciplinarity is appropriately assessed and not disadvantaged in the peer review process?

A. AHRC will ensure careful matching of reviewers to proposals and suitable guidance and briefing for the reviewers and panel.

7. Expected spread of focal awards

7.I.

Q. Is the aim pan-national distribution across all the Focal awards or for each Focal award to have a wider distribution within the consortium?

A. The aim is for the AHRC to create a geographically balanced portfolio, i.e. for the awards within each research theme to be geographically dispersed. This may include a mix of regionally focused consortia as well as consortia which include HEIs, IROs and partners in a range of nations and regions within the UK. Lead applicants have the flexibility to invite HEIs and non-HEIs from within and beyond their region to their consortium.

7.II.

Q. You mention portfolio balancing for geographical region. Is there are requirement for individual consortia to be concentrated in one region? If a HEI has two campuses in different regions, would this mean one of the campuses would be excluded from participation?

A. There is no requirement for individual consortia to be within one region. We welcome consortia that cross regions if that is the best formulation for that consortium. From a portfolio balancing perspective, there would be no need for one of the campuses to be excluded.

7.III.

Q. How does the regional (non) focus of partnerships relate to the core focus on regional skills/UK workforce development?

A. The opportunity welcomes regional as well as national level partnerships. Applicants have the freedom to decide which organisations to partner with. Partners can be local, regional, or national, appropriate to the needs of the research theme. We welcome partnerships with local and regional organisations which contribute to cultural place-making and strengthening local communities and economies. Please see the assessment criteria in the funding opportunity.

7.IV.

Q. Regarding how many students may be based at London HEIs: Is this about the levelling up agenda? Some of the most deprived areas in the UK are in London and that is where the most people live so it is to be expected most funding might go there?

A. Our ambition is to balance the portfolio and one of the elements that will be considered is geography, to avoid concentration in one region or in a small number of regions. Place will be considered at the portfolio balancing stage, among other factors, as per the funding opportunity in which we've said that: "in balancing, the panel will consider the following:

- diversity of higher education institution types and non-HEI partner organisations, to ensure all funded consortia are diverse and collaborate with a diverse group of partner organisations.
- research focus, to ensure we fund consortia which have a distinctive research focus, and the portfolio is balanced across the two themes.
- geographic coverage, to ensure the new training grant awards are located in a range of regions across the UK."

7.V.

Q. Is there any particular expectation about the spread of the studentships held by each HEI in the consortium?

A. No, there are no expectations regarding the spread of studentships. It is up to the applying consortia to determine this based on their capacity e.g supervisory capacity.

7.VI.

Q. Can partners be across the UK or do they need to be geographically clustered?

A. They can be either, what is important, is to have a coherent group of organisations working together to develop and deliver the Focal Award.

7.VII.

Q. Can we create a consortium that spreads across the country?

A. Yes, that would be possible. All applicants are expected to provide a justification that the proposed configuration of partners will work well in terms of the delivering vision and aims of the proposed Focal award.

7.VIII.

Q. Is geographic coverage in fact one of the assessment criteria?

A. Geographic coverage is not an assessment criterion, and the peer reviewers won't score on location. A description of the assessment criteria is included in the Funding Opportunity. However, location is one of the elements that will be considered in portfolio balancing. Once scoring is completed, the highest scoring applications will be balanced based on three criteria, including geographic location, to determine which applications will be supported, as per the funding opportunity in which we've said that: "in balancing, the panel will consider the following:

- diversity of higher education institution types and non-HEI partner organisations, to ensure all funded consortia are diverse and collaborate with a diverse group of partner organisations.
- research focus, to ensure we fund consortia which have a distinctive research focus, and the portfolio is balanced across the two themes.
- geographic coverage, to ensure the new training grant awards are located in a range of regions across the UK."

8. Landscape awards in connection to focal awards

8.I.

Q. If an organisation receives an AHRC doctoral landscape award would they be eligible for a focal award?

A. Yes, an organisation can hold both a landscape and focal award as either lead or co-lead.

8.II.

Q. There was mention at the end of the meeting of 'landscape awards', as well as the focal awards, but I can find no mention online of what landscape awards might refer to.

A. Please refer to this AHRC page, published in late 2023: [Training and support within the](#)

[Future Doctoral Provision Programme – UKRI](#) , in particular, to the following information: *“The doctoral landscape awards will support postgraduate studentships across the breadth of AHRC’s subject remit. We will provide them as block grant awards made to higher education institutions (HEIs). We will be introducing a formula approach to determine which HEIs will be allocated these awards in the Future Doctoral Provision programme. This funding formula has been designed to ensure good regional coverage across the UK. We will be running the funding formula process in spring 2024 and aim to inform successful HEIs in the summer of 2024. Alongside the landscape awards, we will be supporting regional hubs. The hubs will provide added value training for students, opportunities for networking and a route for sharing good practice.”*

8.III.

Q. Are SSIs being encouraged to apply for Doctoral Focal Awards because AHRC anticipates we will not do as well as larger HEIs in the DLA formula-based allocations? (It is challenging for the sector to understand the full picture, currently, as the Doctoral Landscape Awards formula has not yet been published).

A. No this is certainly not the case. SSIs are being encouraged because they are a key constituent of the arts and humanities community that are acknowledged as world-leading and they are well-placed to respond to these opportunities.

8.IV.

Q. 5-6 focal awards per theme is a very low number compared to likely interest. How many landscape awards are likely to be awarded?

A. AHRC are hoping to provide more information on landscape awards in early 2024. Including an indication of the number of landscape awards that are likely to be awarded.

8.V.

Q. Should the landscape awards not be announced before we work on the applications for the focal awards? Those require immense internal discussions, negotiations and writing time before submission.

A. Landscape awards will be made via a formula approach, and it isn't possible to run this process through to announcement and still give sufficient time for HEIs to apply for Focal awards. It is important that Focal award applicants have plenty of time to develop their proposals, to enable partnerships to be formed and enable innovative approaches. A HEI can hold a Landscape award and apply for a Focal award. AHRC appreciates it is a significant effort to apply for funding and advises you to start working on your Focal application before the Landscape awards are announced if you are interested in the scheme.

8.VI.

Q. How do the focal awards sit alongside the landscape/DTP awards? When will landscape hubs be announced so that the focal applications can be structured and formed in the light of this?

A. The Landscape awards allocation will not be made until 2024. We will be running the funding formula process in spring 2024 and aim to inform successful HEIs in the summer of 2024.

Landscape awards will be made via a formula approach, and it isn't possible to run this process through to announcement and still give sufficient time for HEIs to apply for Focal awards. It is important that Focal award applicants have plenty of time to develop their proposals, to enable partnerships to be formed and enable innovative approaches. A HEI can hold a Landscape award and apply for a Focal award. AHRC appreciates it is a significant effort to apply for funding and advises you to start working on your Focal application before the Landscape awards are announced if you are interested in the scheme.

8.VII.

Q. When will AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships award (one of the landscape awards types) be announced?

A. Awards have just been made for round 4 of the Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships and they will support three cohorts of students starting Oct 2024, October 2025 and October 2026. The timetable for the next round is being developed. The new opportunity will be announced on UKRI Funding Finder in due time.

9. Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

9.I.

Q. What level of support is offered from an EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) perspective?

A. In terms of applying for the funding opportunity, AHRC is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all applicants and encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers. We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances which includes supporting candidates for leads and co-leads with the following:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

For further guidance on AHRC's EDI outlook please refer to the following: [equality, diversity and inclusion at UKRI](#) and [AHRC's equality, diversity and inclusion policy](#).

In terms of EDI support for future candidates for doctoral studentships within the doctoral focal award training grants, and students, AHRC mandates that each applicant outlines this in an EDI Action Plan submitted as part of their application. An Equality Impact Assessment for this funding opportunity can be found on the [UKRI Funding Finder](#) under 'Additional Information', and [UKRI training grants terms and conditions and guidance](#) contain more information about support for students on our training grants.

9.II.

Q. What should the EDI action plan contain?

A. You are encouraged to use the following headings in the EDI action plan, but not limited to

them. See the Funding Opportunity for more details. You should include any additional areas of EDI activity and your plans should be evidence-based.

- increasing access to doctoral studies
- recruitment
- working practices
- supervision and supervisory teams
- mental health and wellbeing support

9.III.

Q. What are your expectations in terms of EDI plans and are there any specific targets?

A. Applicants will need to submit a mandatory EDI action plan alongside the training grant application. Your plan must be evidence-based, that is include baseline data and be updated throughout the lifetime of the grant in line with data you regularly collect, including emerging impacts and needs.

EDI is one of the assessment criteria which will be considered by peer reviewers and panel members when applications are assessed, therefore, AHRC expects these plans to be grounded in evidence, well-articulated, and addressing the needs of the community. AHRC hasn't set any specific targets, but applicants are expected to propose actions to reduce underrepresentation in the arts and humanities doctoral community.

You are encouraged to use the following headings in the EDI action plan, but not limited to them. Please include any additional areas of EDI activity.

- increasing access to doctoral studies
- recruitment
- working practices
- supervision and supervisory teams
- mental health and wellbeing support

9.IV.

Q. What evidence are you looking for within the EDI Action Plans? Evidence that plans/interventions exist or evidence to suggest they will succeed?

A. EDI is one of the assessment criteria which will be considered by peer reviewers and panel members when applications are assessed. AHRC expects these plans to be grounded in evidence, well-articulated, and addressing the needs of the community. AHRC will need to see evidence of where you have been able to identify underrepresentation and would expect the Action Plan to set out the course of action to address the identified need(s). If this is a proven intervention, then you may want to include evidence to this effect. If this is a novel approach, then we suggest applicants include a rationale for the proposal. We would also like to see how you intend to monitor if your plans achieve the desired positive change and a plan to course-correct your actions if needed.

9.V.

Q. Are you able to share any templates, examples or best practice for EDI action plans?

A. AHRC have provided headings as a proposed structure for the EDI action plan. It is important to note that evidence must be provided for each of these points to show the needs you have identified and the actions you plan to take. The points can be found here:

<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/apply-for-a-doctoral-focal-award-in-the-arts-and-humanities/>

Unfortunately, we don't have examples available which we can share.

9.VI.

Q. For the EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training call, they removed the EDI requirement and will be working collaboratively with funded centres to co-create plans. This helps harmonise and share best practice and reduce workload. Could this be considered, as part of the harmonisation of approach.

A. AHRC has also worked with our Training Grant investments on EDI to share good practice and we would look to build on this experience. We have taken the decision to include a mandatory requirement for an EDI action plan from applicants for the current opportunity for AHRC Focal Awards. We will continue to reflect on this approach and learning from across UKRI, as well as AHRC's own experience of working with award holders.

10. Assessment process

10.I.

Q. Will there be an interview stage or expert review only?

A: There will not be an interview stage. Applications will be assessed by written peer review, moderation panel, and portfolio balancing, as described on the [UKRI Funding Finder in our funding opportunity](#).

10.II.

Q. Will you provide feedback to all applicants, successful and unsuccessful?

A. Peer reviewers' comments will be sent to all applicants. There will be a lead applicant response stage where you can respond to the feedback. Although we won't provide post-panel feedback to all unsuccessful applicants, we may provide feedback to some if the panel has any specific comments to share.

11. Other categories of questions related to focal awards

11.I.

Q. With the change of the names of funding streams i.e. Focal awards - are we still using the Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs)? Just to note that 'Focal Award' terminology does not make much sense to prospective students, and other stakeholders, the terminology 'Centre for Doctoral Training' is so much clearer, as it signals a community and cohorts. 'Focal Award' does not.

A: We will no longer be using the term CDT/Centres for Doctoral Training. The change in terminology has been implemented to avoid acronyms and to harmonise with other UKRI-funded investments as per [the update on collective talent funding made on the 2nd November 2023](#) which you can read on UKRI website. We hope that, in due time, the 'brand' of doctoral focal awards (focal awards in short) will be recognised by prospective students and other members of the community.

11.II.

Q. On nomenclature: many institutions offer a Doctorate in Fine Arts, which has the same acronym as the doctoral focal award scheme - DFA. I appreciate the desire to move away from acronyms but inevitably they will be used and confusion likely to arise.

A. AHRC will not be using DFA as an acronym in our communications and on the funding service. We would encourage you to use the full name - doctoral focal awards – or refer to them as 'focal awards' in short.

11.III.

Q. Is there potential for identifying connections between proposed doctoral focal award consortia e.g. to enable wider cohort building, resource sharing and draw connections / work between different themes?

A. AHRC encourages such activity and will connect the focal award holders so they can collectively decide if/how to build a wider cohort of AHRC-funded focal students. Applicants are welcome to include such collaborations in their vision and approach sections. Once awards are announced, successful applicants are also welcome to forge connections with other award holders which haven't been anticipated in their applications. AHRC is supportive of the focal awards connecting to learn from each other, support each other, and create a wider community of AHRC funded focal awards students.

11.IV.

Q. Following the latest update from UKRI on the collective talent funding, there is a new statement of expectations which should be applied to funding opportunities launched from January 2024. Please can you confirm if this should be applied to the Focal awards that were launched in November 2023?

A. Even though our opportunity was released before January 2024, we would encourage applicants to refer to this statement, as there is time to implement this change ahead of the closing date in July and students commencing in the 2026/27 academic year.

11.V.

Q. Why is the first cohort entry in 26/27 and not in 25/26?

A. AHRC's existing training grant investments support their final cohort in October 2025. These awards will therefore support the first cohort in the 2026/27 academic year.

11.VI.

Q. Given the small number of awards to be made in total and the huge amount of interest this is creating a lot of work within the system that will be wasted. What plans does AHRC have for minimising this inefficiency? How about Expression of Interest then full applications?

A. We recognise the significant amount of effort involved in developing an application and AHRC did consider having an EOI stage but decided against this. This was because we wanted people to have the maximum amount of time to collaborate, establish relationships, including with new partners, develop innovative approaches and prepare to apply for this opportunity. If we had included an Expression of Interest phase, this would have reduced the time people had to develop the relationships and ideas that are fundamental to the final application. We will identify lessons learned from our first focal awards call and consider whether to add an Expressions of Interest/outline stage to the next focal funding opportunity process.

11.VII.

Q. Is there a chance that AHRC will reconsider their Expression of Interest position?

A. It would not be possible to introduce an Expression of Interest phase for this call as the timeline is already set. AHRC recognises the concerns, but we felt it important that Focal award applicants have plenty of time to enable new partnerships and innovative approaches to be developed. Hence keeping the funding opportunity open from November 2023 to July 2024. Had we included an Expression of Interest stage, we would have needed to reduce the time available to apply. We will identify lessons learned from our first focal awards call and consider whether to add an Expressions of Interest/outline stage to the next focal funding opportunity process.

11.VIII.

Q. Does having no Expression of Interest (EOI) stage gate create an additional carbon footprint?

A. Environmental sustainability is important for UKRI, please see our Environmental Sustainability Strategy: <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/policies-standards-and-data/corporate-policies-and-standards/environmental-sustainability/environmental-sustainability-strategy/> . We recognise that digital applications generate a carbon footprint both at EOI and full application stage. We will identify lessons learned from our first focal awards call and consider whether to add an Expressions of Interest/outline stage to the next focal funding opportunity process, with environmental sustainability being one of the factors we will consider.

11.IX.

Q. How will you handle situations where the training grant was set up for 8 years but final students who are part-time have studentships going beyond the grant funding end date? Will you extend these grants at no-cost?

A. We recognise the issue, and we will provide a solution once the training grants are in place.

11.X.

Q. Will students require Master's level qualifications for eligibility, or is there scope for the programmes to include integrated Master's as with other CDTs? The funding gap at Master's level is a crucial driver of inequalities in doctoral study.

A. We cannot support students to undertake Master's qualifications in this call. Students without a Master's, but with equivalent experience, can be recruited. In addition, there is scope for host organisations to be innovative in their thinking about how to provide further training for students throughout the 4 years. This might include Master's-level modules or similar to bring them up to speed with research skills and expertise relevant to the theme, thereby enabling students without a Master's qualification.

11.XI.

Q. A high proportion of our PhD graduates have to leave the country soon after graduating, even if they wish to contribute to the UK economy with their new skills, because so few are UK residents; and EU-based numbers have crashed. How should we take account of these issues in applications, given the aim of contributing to the UK economy?

A. Immigration policy is a matter for government. UKRI runs the Global Talent Visa, which supports highly skilled researchers to establish themselves in the UK and provides them with the flexibility to switch jobs and grow their careers. Since its launch in 2020, the GTV has helped over 5,000 talented people from over 130 different countries to build their careers in the UK. You can find out more [here](#). Whilst we hope that doctoral graduates will remain in the UK, consortia, and the students they support, can contribute to the UK economy through a variety of ways, these may be during or after completion of the doctoral project.

11.XII.

Q. Will the written Q&A from the webinars be available to attendees afterwards?

A. Recordings were uploaded to [the UKRI for Researchers YouTube channel](#) following each of the webinars, and [this document](#) captures the answers. Therefore, any questions that were answered within the Q&A part of the webinars can be reviewed in the recordings and are available both to attendees and the wider community.

11.XIII.

Q. Will the recordings of the webinars be shared after?

A. Yes, both of the webinars were recorded and uploaded to [the UKRI for Researchers YouTube channel](#) and are available to both attendees and the wider community.

11.XIV.

Q. Could I be added as a contact for the forthcoming focal award events?

A. You are very welcome to register through Eventbrite; please follow the links in the 'Additional Info' section of the Funding Finder page: [Doctoral focal awards in the arts and humanities – UKRI](#). We don't have a mailing list for the focal awards funding opportunity but you can follow us on X/twitter at @ahrcpress for news about future events and funding opportunities

11.XV.

Q. Will the online surgery event Q&A be documented and shared with the academic community in good time ahead of the deadline?

A. The webinars were both recorded and uploaded to [the UKRI for Researchers YouTube channel](#). Therefore, any questions that were answered within the Q&A part of these webinars can be found in the recording and are available both to attendees and the wider community. The final upcoming online surgery on the 20th June 2024 will allow for more detailed questions and we are not planning to publish these sessions. AHRC appreciates that not everyone will be able to attend a surgery and not all questions within the surgery meetings will be answered due to time limitations, so we offer everyone an alternative opportunity to email queries to us at enquiries@ahrc.ukri.org at any point when the funding opportunity is live.

11.XVI.

Q. Will there be an opportunity to provide feedback on this webinar?

A. You are welcome to email feedback to enquiries@ahrc.ukri.org

11.XVII.

Q. When updating your web page with additional information, can you include the date and indicate the update introduced?

A. UKRI Funding Finder includes a list of dates when an opportunity has been updated, and what content has been updated within it.