

**University of Stirling**

**Doctoral Landscape Award:**

**Student-Led Competition**

**2026 GUIDANCE**



# Introduction

Welcome to the University of Stirling’s AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award open competition for 2026. This document summarises the new DLA programme and provides guidance for applicants and supervisors.

We encourage potential applicants and supervisors to read the guidance carefully in advance of preparing their submissions to the competition. It is crucial that the University of Stirling and the DLA provide an excellent fit for the applicant and their research project.

Alongside our competition for open studentships, we are also running a Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) scheme. This scheme will fund one project that has been developed in collaboration with external organisations across creative, heritage, third and business sectors. Guidance for the CDA scheme is available in a separate document.

If you require any further information or clarification, please contact the Postgraduate Research team at: [FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk](mailto:FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk). You may also wish to contact Professor Christine Ferguson ([Christine.ferguson@stir.ac.uk](mailto:Christine.ferguson@stir.ac.uk)), who is the SGSAH Lead for the University of Stirling’s Faculty of Arts and Humanities in 2025-26.

# The Scottish AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award

Seven Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) across Scotland are offering AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award (DLA) PhD studentships in the Arts & Humanities, for start dates in October 2026. The HEIs offering awards are the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews, Stirling and Strathclyde.

It is planned that SGSAH will be the home of the AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award Hub, which will offer collective doctoral training and development activities to the funded cohort of DLA PhD studentship holders, sometimes in partnership with broader communities of Arts & Humanities doctoral researchers across [all 17 of SGSAH’s member HEIs](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/about/members/). More details of the projected training are detailed 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.\*\*\***

The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub: Purpose

The Doctoral Landscape Award (DLA) Hub for Scotland, delivered through the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities (SGSAH), will provide an innovative, inclusive and responsive doctoral training and development platform for Arts and Humanities students. Building on the successful foundations of two previous AHRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP1 and DTP2), the DLA Hub will enhance the doctoral experience and further extend its relevance and impact at local, national, and global levels.

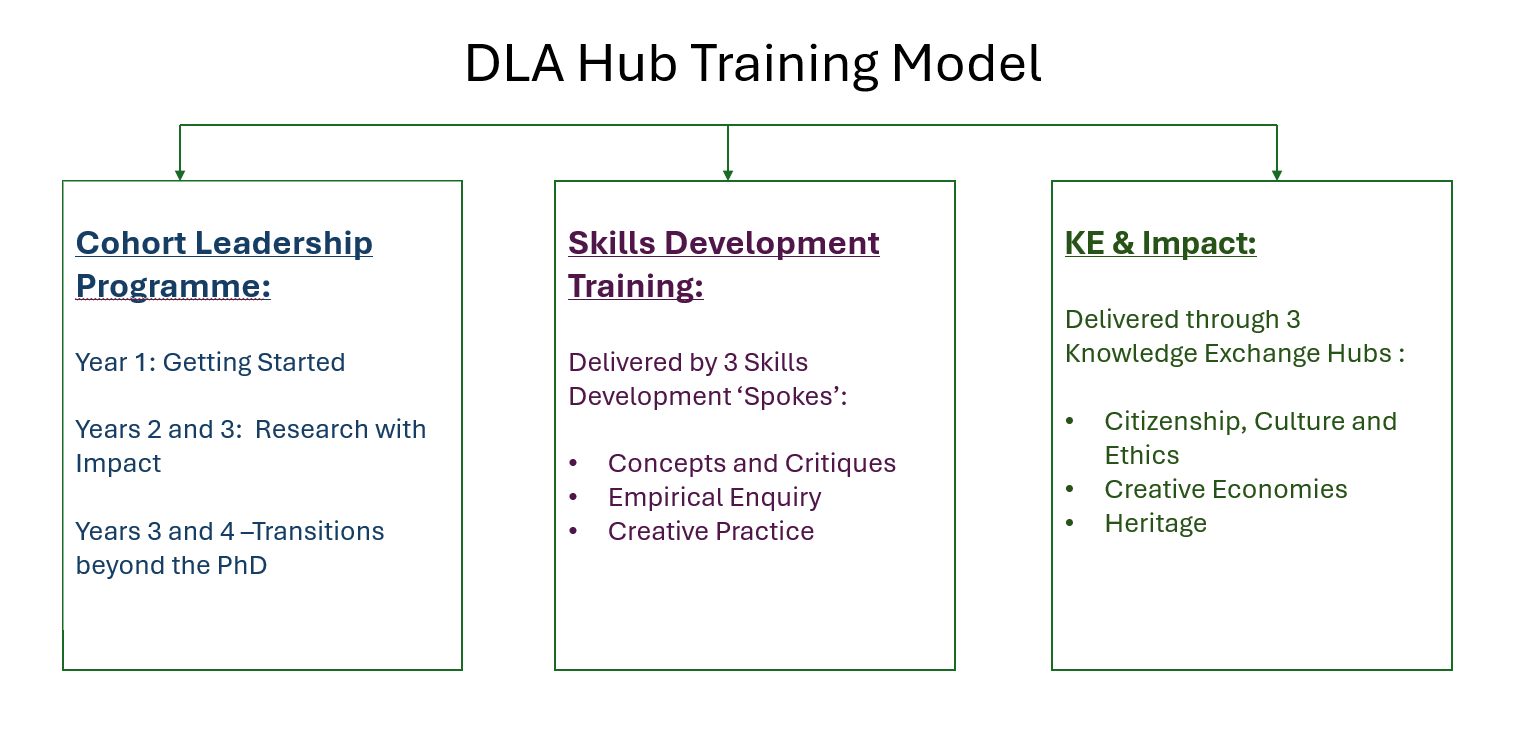
The Hub will support cohorts of world-class doctoral researchers to contribute meaningfully across academic, creative, public, and professional spheres. It will:

* Provide cohort-responsive training that complements institutional provision and promotes academic excellence.
* Offer interdisciplinary, methodological and creative development through three skills development spokes: *Concepts and Critiques, Empirical Enquiry*, and *Creative Practice*.
* Strengthen knowledge exchange (KE) by sustaining and developing internships and collaborative partnerships, including engagement with the existing KE Hubs (Heritage, Creative Economies, Citizenship & Policy).
* Embed equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) to ensure accessibility and equity of opportunity.
* Leverage existing national resources and infrastructure to enable a seamless transition from the Doctoral Training Partnership 2 (which the DLA succeeds) and through SGSAH and member HEIs sustain a world-class Arts & Humanities doctoral training environment in Scotland.

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:

1. **Cohort Leadership Programme**: the opportunity to come together as a cohort group to foster collaboration, benefit from sector-leading A&H training from academics across Hub HEIs and build networks.
2. **Specialised A&H Training:** academic training will be arranged along three broad conceptual and methodological ‘spokes’: Concepts and Critiques (ideas, concepts, theories and framework); Empirical Enquiry (methodologies, including archival research, digital humanities, and social research); and Creative Practice (all forms of creative practice as research, creative methodologies and engagements with creative industries).
3. **Knowledge Exchange**: building on the strong KE relationships that SGSAH has built up over a decade, the Hub will offer training opportunities for students to develop skills, build networks, deliver impact, and understand related sectors, and for organisations to benefit from skilled doctoral researchers through SGSAH’s successful internship programme. Researchers will be supported to demonstrate the value of A&H to society, industry, and other disciplines.



The Doctoral Landscape Award Hub: Cohort Leadership Programme

The Cohort Leadership Programme will bring the whole cohort together across HEIs and disciplinary areas, which is essential for leadership, development and networking. A stepped training and development programme will be delivered by 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.

These proposals build on high-quality events developed under DTP2, adapted to the changed nature, scale and resourcing of the cohort, and aligned with sectoral policy such as the UKRI New Deal for Postgraduate Research.

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 HEIs. 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 A&H 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 A&H research, whether through archival enquiry, working with images and objects, through surveys or interviews, or quantification, within ethical frameworks.
* **Creative Practice:** training exploringall forms of creative practice as research and creative methodologies, including writing, composing and performing arts within creative industry contexts.

Training events will often straddle more than one spoke and/or discipline; where events are grounded in a particular discipline they will be designed to benefit students from beyond that discipline. 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](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/e_t/dp/) will be double-badged so that they also appear in the programme of training linked to the Spokes.

The SGSAH Summer School is a well-established flagship for A&H training in Scotland, available to any A&H PhD researcher in member HEIs and delivered through a blend of online and face-to-face training. SGSAH intends to continue the Summer School, incorporating aspects of the current DTP2 Discipline+ Catalysts and Knowledge Exchange Hubs, and adding the Skills Development Training Spokes. Spring into Methods, SGSAH’s collaboration with SGSSS, will also continue to offer innovative methodological training beyond disciplinary boundaries and beyond A&H.

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)](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/partners/ke-hubs/), offer routes into collaboration with external partners from public, private and third sector organisations, including via research 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 (e.g. BBC Scotland, Creative Scotland, National Museums Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Parliament), and with research centres and institutes in HEIs across Scotland.

DLA PhD researchers will attend at least one KE and Impact event per year, benefitting from insights and expertise drawn from A&H 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, HEIs 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](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/current/funding/cdf/) opportunities for student-led training opportunities to be designed and delivered. These opportunities will align with and be promoted through the Skills Development Training Spokes and KE Hubs.

# Equalities Statement and Actions

The University of Stirling and SGSAH aim to ensure equity of experience and opportunity to access funded studentships. To achieve this aim, our assessment process at Stirling will include:

* A section of the applicant form for ‘Relevant Professional Experience’ that aims to provide a level playing field for applicants with unrelated, dated or no Masters qualifications but who have demonstrably relevant professional experience
* Ring-fenced shortlist interviews for UK-domiciled BME applicants, care experienced and refugee applicants who meet the essential criteria
* Optional flagging by applicants from areas of under-representation,

which alters the weighting of the scoring criteria

* All panel reviewers receive EDI and unconscious bias training

## Ring-fenced Interviews and Reweighting

For the 2026 competition, the University of Stirling will guarantee shortlist interviews for applicants who meet the essential criteria and are care-experienced, from a UK-domiciled Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community, or hold refugee status.

In terms of process, applicants should check the box on the application form that asks if they wish to be considered for a ringfenced interview. The Professional Services team will then be in touch to request more detail.

## University of Stirling DLA Application Process

In 2026, the University of Stirling will award two studentships to new PhD students undertaking projects of their own design in the arts and humanities.

**3.1 Eligibility**

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
* If a candidate does not meet the criteria above, they would be classed as an

International student

## 3.2 Application Process and Deadlines

Applications should be submitted via web form on the UoS SGSAH DLA website by no later than **4pm on Monday, 15 December 2025**. For this same deadline, you should arrange for your academic transcripts (in a single PDF form) and two letters of reference to be emailed to the FAH Postgraduate Research office at: [FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk](mailto:FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk) .

Your supervisor must submit a Supervisory Statement of Support, also via web form, by **4pm on Thursday,15 January 2025**.

You can download .doc versions of the student application and supervisory statement of support on the website, and will also find them attached to this guidance. Applicants should first draft their text on these templates, and then cut and paste the material into the web form for the deadline.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that they have all the necessary documents ready for submission by the deadline. Please note that we will **not** accept late applications where there has been failure at the applicant’s end (e.g. failure of internet connection). For this reason, **we strongly advise applicants to complete the application process at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline.**

# Guidance on completing the 2026 Application Form

**General notes on the application**

You should read this guidance thoroughly before you begin your application. It is essential that you seek advice from your prospective supervisor as you prepare the form, and you should share drafts with them well in advance of the submission deadline. They will comment on the application and on your timely engagement with the process in the Supervisory Statement of Support they submit in January.

## General note on the online form

Be aware that the online application form will automatically cut off entries over the stated word limits.

## 4.1 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 at least until September 2026.

## Eligibility

This section asks you to confirm your eligibility to apply, and to identify your pending status as either a home or international student.

While international students are eligible to apply for a DLA studentship, please be aware that the AHRC studentship only covers **home** fees. In 2026, the University of Stirling will require any international awardee to pay the difference between the home and international fees (in 2025, home PhD tuition fees in Arts & Humanities were £5,006 and international PhD tuition fees were £19,500). Funding will not be available from the AHRC beyond the home fee level already covered.

Please note that for visa purposes, international awardees will have to demonstrate that they can pay the difference in fees.

Please identify your residency status in one of the tick boxes. If you have any queries about your status, please contact the Postgraduate Admissions team for advice at: [postgraduate.admissions@stir.ac.uk](mailto:postgraduate.admissions@stir.ac.uk)

Only new PhD researchers may apply for an award.

## 4.3 Request for Ring-Fenced Interview

Please indicate here whether you are eligible to be considered for a ring-fenced interview. To be eligible for a ring-fenced interview, you must be a Home student from a BAME background, have refugee status or be care-experienced.

## 4.4 Use of Optional Flags to Reweight Scoring Criteria

We are aware that some people face unfair structural barriers, which may bereflected 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, we have identified a list of Widening Participation “flags”. If you qualify on any of these criteria, you can choose to have your previous qualification/relevant professional experience and preparedness for research under-weighted and your project proposal be overweighted as follows:

Category Current Weighting Proposed Weighting

Qualifications/Experience 12% 6%

Proposal 28% 44%

Preparedness 20% 10%

All other scored parts of the application will be unchanged.

If you wish to be considered for this reweighting, please tick the box to indicate that fall within one or more of the categories listed below. The reweighting will be the same, irrespective of the number of flags. If, after the reweighting process, the total score is lower, your original score will be used.

• 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

## 4.5 Residency Requirements

Funded students must adhere to the residency requirements set out in the AHRC Training Grant Terms and Conditions during the term of their study.

## 4.6 Identifying Subject and Division Panel

Your proposal will be reviewed first at Divisional level and, if shortlisted there, at the final Faculty award panel. Please select the University of Stirling Subject/Division in which your project will sit. If your supervisory team is drawn from subjects covered by different Divisions **and** yoursupervisors are equally weighted (50%/50%), you may select two. Both panels will review your application.

Where there is a differentiated supervisory weighting, you should submit your application to the panel with the greater weighting (e.g. if you have a lead supervisor in Communications, Media, and Culture who will undertake 75% of the supervision, and a second in Literature and Languages who will undertake 25%, the application should be submitted to the CMC panel).

If, after reviewing these options, you are still unsure which panel(s) to select, please seek the advice of your proposed supervisors and/or Faculty Lead for SGSAH. In order for a proposal to be eligible for consideration by AHRC, the choice of Primary Research Area must come from one of the recognized disciplines listed in the [AHRC Funding Guide](https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AHRC-200525-ResearchFundingGuide-Version7.2-May2025.pdf).

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| --- | --- |
| **Panels** | **Subjects** |
| **Communications, Media and Culture** | * Digital Media * Film and Media * Journalism * Public Relations |
| **History, Heritage, and Politics** | * History * Heritage * Politics (as framed within AHRC disciplines) |
| **Law and Philosophy** | * Law * Philosophy [Philosophy applicants must first have been nominated through the St Andrews/Stirling Graduate Programme. See below for more information] |
| **Literature and Languages** | * Creative Writing * Languages (Chinese, French & Francophone Studies, Spanish & Latin American Studies) * Linguistics * Literature * Publishing Studies * Religion * Translation Studies |

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## 4.7 Philosophy Projects and the St Andrews and Stirling Graduate Programme (SASP) Nomination Process

At PhD level, Stirling Philosophy is part of the fully integrated St Andrews and Stirling Graduate programme in Philosophy (SASP), delivered jointly by the Philosophy departments at the University of St Andrews and the University of Stirling (for further information, see

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/sasp/introduction/>). This means that Philosophy applicants to the Stirling Landscape Awards competition must first have been nominated through SASP. To be considered for such a nomination, you must apply for admission to SASP by the deadline of **10th November 2025**. This requires that you make an application *not* via the Stirling admissions system, but via the St Andrews admissions system.

Further details are available here:

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/sasp/the-sasp-degree/how-to-apply/>

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/sasp/the-sasp-degree/funding/>

Please indicate clearly on your SASP application that you wish to be considered for a Landscape Award, and include whether you are a Home or International applicant. Please also indicate your preferred first supervisor, and note that Philosophy applicants to the Stirling Landscape Awards must have a supervisory team based at the University of Stirling. If you are successful in being offered a PhD place on SASP, you will automatically be considered for nomination for the Landscape Awards. If you are then successful in being nominated, you will be informed that you need to prepare a further application, specific to the Stirling Landscape Awards competition, by the deadline of 15th December 2025.

## 4.8 Interdisciplinary projects beyond the Arts & Humanities

We support PhD research projects that cross disciplines. We will fund proposals where at least 50% of the project falls within the AHRC’s remit.

Interdisciplinary projects that involve STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Medicine) may well need to use the Individual Training Allowance for additional funded research time. Please explain your use of the ITA carefully in the relevant section (described below).

## 4.9 Qualifications

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

You will need provide full transcripts to [FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk](mailto:FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk). Copies of degree certificates alone do not provide sufficient evidence. Transcripts should be in English, and where necessary a certified translation should be provided. 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 by the supervisor(s) in the Supervisory Statement of Support.

## 4.10 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 candidates 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.

While we do not discriminate against applicants who might not previously have had the opportunity to study at postgraduate level, you should be aware that a doctoral degree is a 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 is equivalent to that obtained through a Masters course and therefore prepares you to continue to doctoral study.

## 4.11 Research Summary (100 words maximum)

Please provide a summary of your proposed research project that will be comprehensible to non-specialists.

## 4.12 Research Proposal (1000 words maximum)

This section must describe your proposal and should include 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).

We are seeking original, innovative, cogent, and coherent proposals which are well-written in their entirety. Completion of the project should be feasible within 3½ years or part-time equivalent OR within the additional funded period of up to 6 months (or PT equivalent) requested in the ITA/Engagement with the DLA Cohort Training section.

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: demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and 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. The SGSAH DLA aims 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?

## 4.13 Preparedness to Undertake Doctoral Project & Complete a PhD (300 words maximum)

Here, we are not asking you simply to rehash your qualifications. More specifically, we want to know what particular aspects of your previous academic work or professional has equipped you to undertake this particular doctoral project, and to complete a project of this length within the designated time frame. You may wish to refer to:

a) the topic(s) and length of successfully-completed dissertations and modules;

b) specific and appropriate methodological training and/or expertise (e.g. proficiency in a relevant language, particular archival research or IT skills etc.);

c) work-based learning or employment in a relevant occupation, etc.;

d) notable achievements, either academic (prizes, conference presentations, publications) or non-academic (professional or personal accomplishments, overcoming barriers, etc).

**4.14** **Individual Training Allowance (ITA) and Engagement with the DLA Cohort Training (400 words)**

*ITA*

All awards include a 3.5-year studentship and an additional 6 months of funding that will form an Individual Training Allowance. You may choose how to use the ITA to maximize your particular research, training, and/or professional needs. Applicants may opt to extend their funded research period and/or fund specific activities, such as fieldwork, internships, visiting doctoral positions and associated costs, etc.

First, check one of the boxes to indicate which of the ITA options you prefer. Then, in the text section, detail and explain your plans both for using your ITA and for engaging with the DLA Cohort Training Programme. We understand that plans can change, and applicants will not automatically be locked into programme they submit at the point of application. However, it is essential that candidates have considered their specific training needs.

SGSAH will require all DLA-funded students to:

* complete foundation training as required by the lead HEI
* complete our DLA Cohort Leadership Programme consisting of an induction, one residential event for each full-time year of study, a symposium in year two and our annual Summer Schools
* be a member of and participate in at least one Skills Development Spoke event and one KE Hub event per annum.

You should meet with your supervisor and discuss what training options might work best for you. Would your programme benefit from fieldwork, language learning, an internship, a visit to an international university, or additional funded research time? Why? Check the appropriate box and then describe your plans. The more specific you can be here, the better; do name any prospective partners or activities that you have in mind.

Additional research time can be requested, but do note that using the ITA for this purpose means you will have less funds to allocate for other ITA activities. Further funded research time should only be requested here for specific academic reasons, not simply as a backup in case the thesis is not ready for submission in 3.5 years. All doctoral projects should be carefully designed for submission within their requested programme length, whatever the length.

## 4.15 Ethics and Research Integrity (300 words)

Any project funded by the SGSAH DLA 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 within the competition process, but it is important that this section of the form is given due consideration in order to indicate the proposal’s feasibility. You can find details of the University of Stirling’s Research and Ethics policy and procedure [here](https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/research-ethics-and-integrity/).

## 4.16 Plagiarism and Generative AI

Applicants are asked to tick a box confirming that their application constitutes their own original work and is not plagiarised. While it is necessary for applicants to have worked with supervisors constructing their applications, the applicant is solely responsible for the drafting of their application text.

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. However, if your application text is substantially identical to your previously written work, the originality of the project may be in question.

Candidates must also declare any use of Generative AI in the production of their application. They should check the appropriate box in this section. If they have used Generative AI, their use must be in line with UKRI’s [*Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Application Preparation and Assessment*](https://www.ukri.org/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-application-and-assessment-policy/use-of-generative-artificial-intelligence-in-application-preparation-and-assessment/)policy. They will be required to explain how and in what sections they have used AI, and how they have mitigated against the risks identified in the policy.

## 4.17 SGSAH Requirements

As a SGSAH AHRC DLA-funded doctoral researcher, you are required to join and participate in at least one Skills Development 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.

**4.18** **Lead Supervisor Name and Email**

Please provide the name and University of Stirling email address for your primary supervisor. They will be responsible for submitting a supervisory statement of support in January 2026.

**4.19 Data Storage and Sharing**

The University of Stirling is required to collect and share anonymized, limited specialized characteristic data with SGSAH for the purposes of Equalities Monitoring and to fulfil our contractual obligations to UK Research and Innovation. We will also share details of awardees and their project with the SGSAH/DLA Hub to help us deliver training and comply with funding requirements. To progress your application, you must check both boxes.

Applicants are advised that UKRI will also make awardee names and project summaries available to the public through, for example, the Gateway to Research webpage.

## Further queries

If you have any further queries, please refer to our FAQs or contact the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Postgraduate research team at [FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk](mailto:FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk). We will run information and Q&A sessions to support applications in the autumn 2025 academic term. Contact the FAH email address for training dates and registration.

6. Frequently asked questions

**Can I apply to more than one HEI?**  
All institutions in the SGSAH Hub will run their own competitions. This application is only for projects that will be entirely based at the University of Stirling.

**Can I be supervised across more than one HEI?** No. The structure of the new Doctoral Landscape Award means that projects will now need to be wholly based within the HEI where the supervision is situated. The one exception to this case is for applicants seeking to undertake doctoral study in philosophy through the St Andrews and Stirling Graduate Programme (SASP). The SASP nomination process is described above in section 4.7.

**If I am unsuccessful this year, can I apply again in future years?**

No. The Doctoral Landscape Award is only open to students who have not yet started their PhD programme.

**How will my proposal be assessed?**

Your application will first be reviewed by a panel of academics from the Division(s) in which your project will be based. If your application is shortlisted by a Divisional panel, it will then be sent to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities DLA committee for further review and ranking. Following their meeting, shortlisted candidates will be interviewed in advance of the final decision.

Our marking scheme and indicative criteria are contained at the end of this guidance document.

**When will I find out if I have been successful?**

We aim to make initial offers for awards starting in October 2026 in late March 2026.

**Can I delay the start of my study?**

A key element of the success of the Doctoral Landscape Award is the development of a strong and connected cohort of doctoral researchers and so we expect that all studentships will begin in October each year. Exceptionally we may permit deferment within the academic year once awards have been made.

If you have a query that isn’t answered here or on the [FAQ](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/prospective/dtp/faqs/) section of our website, please email FAH Postgraduate Research team at [FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk](mailto:FAH-PGR@stir.ac.uk).

# SGSAH AHRC DLA Application Form Template 2026

This template is available to download so you can prepare in advance of the online web form opening on 1 December 2025. The webform link will close at close at 4pm GMT on Monday, 15 December, 2025.

Late applications will not be accepted.

The application form should be read alongside the accompanying University of Stirling Doctoral Landscape Award & Funded Studentship Open Competition 2026 Guidance. We strongly recommend that applicants attend the briefing and information sessions run by the University; applications must have supervisory support and reflect a knowledge of the DLA scheme in order to make it through the review process.

**Personal Details**

Applications are reviewed anonymously. Personal Details will not be shared with reviewers.

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| Name |
| Email  *We will normally contact you by email so please ensure you use an address you check regularly, and which will be available to you****at least until September 2026*** |
| Permanent Address |
| Correspondence Address if different |
| **Eligibility**  Please select one of the following based on your circumstances. The information you provide will be used to assess your fee status to determine your funding eligibility.  If the information you provide is inaccurate and results in a change of your fee status at the point of admission, we reserve the right to withdraw any offer made.  □ I am a UK national AND will have been ordinarily resident in the UK for three years as of 1st October 2026  □ I am an EU, EEA, or Swiss national resident in the UK having obtained pre-settled/settled status AND will have been ordinarily resident in the UK for three years as of 1st October 2026 (please provide immigration share code and your date of birth)  □ I am a non-EU national and have settled status in the UK and will have been ordinarily resident in the UK for three years as of 1st October 2026 (please provide documentary evidence of your immigration status in the UK)  □ None of the above (I am an international student) |

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| **Ring-fencing and Optional Flags for Reweighting Scoring**  [ ] Please indicate whether you are eligible to be considered for a ring-fenced interview.  [ ] Please indicate whether you wish to have your scoring reweighted under the optional flags listed in the guidance. |

**PhD Programme of Study**

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| Name of PhD Programme in which you will enroll |  |

**Divisional panel(s) and subject areas of PhD Project**

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| *Please select the University of Stirling Subject/Division in which your project will sit. If your supervisory team is drawn from subjects covered by different Divisions* ***and*** *your**supervisors are equally weighted (50%/50%), you may select two. Both panels will review your application.*  Communications, Media, and Culture   * Digital Media * Film and Media * Journalism * Public Relations   History, Heritage and Politics   * History * Heritage * Politics   Law and Philosophy   * Law * Philosophy [Philosophy applicants must first have been nominated through the St Andrews and Stirling Graduate Programme. See guidance for further information.]   Literature and Languages   * Creative Writing * Languages (Chinese, French and Francophone Studies, Spanish and Latin American Studies) and Translation Studies * Literature * Linguistics * Publishing Studies * Religion |

**Qualifications**

*The AHRC expects applicants to have****completed or to be studying towards a Postgraduate Masters qualification in a relevant subject****.  If you are****not****in this position, you****must use****the ‘Relevant professional experience’ section to provide evidence that the training and development you have received is equivalent to that obtained through a Masters course in a relevant subject and, therefore, prepares you to continue to doctoral study****.***

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| **University or College** | **Dates of award** | **Degree/Diploma** | **Main subjects** | **Grade, Class or GPA** |
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**Qualifications pending**

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| **University or College** | **Anticipated date of award** | **Degree/Diploma** | **Main subjects** |
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| **Relevant professional experience (300 words maximum)**  **If you complete this section, it will be reviewed in place of qualifications.**  You should only complete it if:   * You 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 if your Masters degree is not in a relevant subject * AND you have significant professional experience, which is relevant to your research proposal.     *You should use this section to provide evidence that the training and development you have received is equivalent to that obtained through a relevant Masters course and, therefore, prepares you to continue to doctoral study.* |

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| **Research proposal title** |

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| **Research Summary (100 words)**  *Summary of the proposed research project that will be comprehensible to non-specialists and suitable for PR and communication channels.* |

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| **Research Proposal (1000 words)**  *We seek innovative, cogent and coherent proposals that are well-written in their entirety and have been designed for completion within the funded period. The methodology should be demonstrably appropriate and the whole proposal well-grounded in current research literature and/or practice. Full bibliographic referencing is not required. Please use the subheadings below to ensure that you speak to each section of the criteria.*   1. *Research question(s)/problem*   What question or problem is your project designed to answer, and why is it a timely and important one? Why is the University of Stirling the right place to investigate it?   1. *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? 2. *Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement & Impact*: What plans do you have for identifying and engaging with groups beyond the academy 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? |

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| **Preparedness to Undertake Doctoral Project and Complete a PhD (300 words)**  *Please explain how your academic and/or professional experience has prepared you to undertake this particular doctoral project, and to complete a project of this length within the designated time frame.* You may wish to refer to:   1. *the topic(s) and length of successfully-completed dissertations and modules;* 2. *specific and appropriate methodological training and/or expertise (e.g. proficiency in a relevant language, particular archival research or IT skills etc.);* 3. *work-based learning or employment in a relevant occupation, etc.;d) notable achievements, either academic (prizes, conference presentations, publications) or non-academic (professional or personal accomplishments, overcoming barriers, etc).* |

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| **Individual Training Allowance (ITA) and Engagement with the DLA Cohort Training (400 words)**  *All awards include a 3.5 year studentship and an additional 6 months of funding that will form an Individual Training Allowance that can be to either extend your study period/and or pursue bespoke training opportunities necessary for the completion of your research project and professional goals. In this section, we want to hear how you plan to use your ITA, and how you will engage with the cohort-wide training opportunities offered by the DLA Hub and the University.*  *First, check one of the following boxes:*  My project requires (Drop-down options):   * A 3.5 year studentship + 6 months of additional funded research * A 3.5 year studentship + 3 months of additional funded research + additional activity (fieldwork, internship, visiting research placement, + associated costs) equivalent to 3 months of funding * A 3.5 year studentship + additional activity (fieldwork, internship, visiting research placement, + associated costs) equivalent to 6 months of funding * A 3.5 year studentship + other (explain)   Now, please tell us more about your plans.   * Why have you chosen to use your ITA in this way? Why is your chosen combination of additional funded research time and/or additional activity necessary to the successful completion of your project and to your professional development goals? What kinds of activity will you use your funding to pursue? * How will you contribute the life of the Hub, and how will the three components of the Hub training offer be relevant to your project? |

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| **Ethics and Research Integrity (300 words maximum)**  Are there any ethical or safety issues attached to this research project and/or its impact plans? If so, how these will be addressed. You can find details of the University of Stirling’s Research and Ethics policy and procedure [here](https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/research-ethics-and-integrity/). |

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| **Plagiarism and generative AI**  [Tick box] This application constitutes my own original work. I understand that if any plagiarism is detected in the review process, my application may be withdrawn from consideration.  [Tick box] In producing my application, I have not used generative AI  [Tick box] I have used generative AI in the preparation of my proposal, but only in the terms permissible within UKRI’s [*Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Application Preparation and Assessment*](https://www.ukri.org/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-application-and-assessment-policy/use-of-generative-artificial-intelligence-in-application-preparation-and-assessment/)policy.  If you ticked the box above, please describe your use of AI below. In what sections, and for what functions, have you used it? How have you mitigated against the risks of AI use explained in the policy? [300 words maximum] |

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| **Lead Supervisor Name and Email** |  |

**Data Sharing and Storage**

□ I 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.

□ I 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.

Applications from nominees 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. This application may be read by up to twelve reviewers.

# Guidance for supervisors on completing the DLA Supervisory Statement of Support

Students will submit their online application, along with academic transcripts and two letters of reference, by 4pm GMT on Monday, 15 December, 2025. As supervisors, you should have worked with the applicant closely during the application preparation process and approved the final version. If a student contacts you at the last minute, or does not show you their application prior to the December deadline, you should not support it as you do not have enough information to determine the feasibility of the project or the quality of the candidate. You should only support an application if you are confident in the likelihood of its success.

Supervisors will be required to submit their Supervisory Statement of Support via webform by 4pm GMT on Thursday, 15 January, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted. We advise supervisors to submit their statements at least 48 hours before the portal closes to allow for any technical issues.

The Supervisory Statement is designed to allow supervisory teams to demonstrate that they offer an excellent fit for the applicant and their specific PhD research project. To this end, we invite supervisors to explain:

• the relevance and fit of the proposal with the proposed supervisory team in its entirety;

• the relevance and fit of the University of Stirling research environment

You will also be required to approve the student’s plans for using their Individual Training Allowance and for engaging with DLA Cohort Training.

**Non-standard and/or unclassified qualifications**

If your nominated candidate 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, we ask you to confirm the quality of the work by making reference to the examiner’s report.

**Request for Cross-Panel Consideration**

Applications which cross two of our Divisional Panels will be reviewed in each panel. If this is the case for your prospective student’s project, indicate so here. Please note that two panels should only be selected if the supervisory team has an equal weighting across two panels e.g. 50% Literature and Languages and 50% Communications, Media, and Culture (see student application guidance for explanation of subject and Divisional panel alignments).

**Interdisciplinary Projects beyond the Arts & Humanities**

SGSAH will fund interdisciplinary projects where at least 50% of the project falls within the AHRC’s disciplinary domains. If relevant, please detail the interdisciplinary nature of the project beyond the arts & humanities, and how the student’s training programme and resources will be tailored to support it. (200 words max).

**Supervisory Team**

We seek evidence that the supervisory team and research environment at the University of Stirling offer the best possible support for the applicant and their project. A compelling rationale for the supervisory arrangement will need to be provided in the ‘Supervisory Expertise and Research Environment’ section.

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 *only* supervisory allocations available are:**

75%/25%

50%/50%

60%/20%/20%

The DLA will not formally recognise supervisory input of less than 20%.

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 of the Supervisory Statement 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. SGSAH welcomes and supports the development of ECRs through its DLA programme. ‘Outputs’ refers to publications, practice-based research including performances, exhibitions, compositions, etc.

**Supervisory Expertise and Research Training Environment (500 words maximum)**

We seek here demonstrable and persuasive evidence that the supervisory arrangements offer the PhD researcher the best training environment possible within the University of Stirling.

* *Why is this the right supervisory team and research environment (at Divisional/ /Faculty and/or University Level) for this project and this applicant?*
* *What will the student/project add to the research environment?*
* *What role will each supervisor play in supporting the doctoral researcher and their project?*
* *How will the supervision be managed and sustained?*(SGSAH actively supports the development of Early Career Researchers. Where an ECR is a member of the supervisory team, please provide details on how the ECR will be mentored/supported in their role.)

**Confirmation of Applicant’s Plans for the Individual Training Allowance (ITA) and for Engaging with the DLA Cohort Training**

All awards include a 3.5 year studentship and an additional 6 months of funding that will form an Individual Training Allowance (ITA) to be used to pursue the particular training needs and career development needs of the applicant. In the student application form, candidates must explain how they plan to use their ITA and to engage with the DLA hub in their application form. They should co-develop these plans with their prospective supervisory team, who are here required to indicate that they have seen and approved of the plans.

You must confirm that the supervisory team has discussed and approved the student’s plans for the ITA and for engaging with the DLA Cohort Training. As supervisor, you will be responsible for supporting the student to realize their plans, and if you have not seen or do not approve of them, please indicate so. In this situation, you may briefly explain the circumstances in the text box.

SGSAH requires all AHRC funded students to:

* complete foundational training as required by the lead-HEI
* complete the SGSAH DLA Leadership Programme consisting of an induction, one residential event for each full-time year of study, a symposium in year two and our annual Summer School
* be a member of and participate in at least one Skills Development Spoke event and one KE Hub event per annum.

As the DLA has newly been launched this year, its programme is still in development. We would recommend that the doctoral researcher and supervisory team review the SGSAH “Events and Training” page [here](https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/e_t/) to get a sense of the type of activity that has previously been offered.

**Ethics & Research Integrity**

Any project funded by SGSAH DLA 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.

**Confirmation of supervisory requirements**

SGSAH DLA is committed to the continuing professional development of our PhD supervisors, which we see as essential to the provision of an excellent training environment for our students. Measures agreed by our HEI members are:

* One member of the proposed supervisory team must have previously supervised at least one doctoral candidate to successful completionat the point of the nomination being submitted. This need not be the Lead Supervisor.
* At the point of application, all supervisors must have completed the University of Stirling PGR Supervisor Professional Development training appropriate for their career stage as either New Supervisors, Supervisors new to Stirling, or Experienced supervisors. It is expected that all supervisors will maintain engagement with Supervisory CPD and refresh their training as required.

# SGSAH AHRC DLA Supervisory Statement of Support 2026

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| **Title of research proposal:** |

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| **Non-standard and/or unclassified qualifications**  *If your nominated candidate holds a non-standard and/or unclassified qualification, please provide further information about their qualification. 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, confirm the quality of the work by* *making reference to the examiner’s report (**e.g. excellent and publishable; strong and of near-publishable standard).* |

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| **Confirmation of Cross-Panel Status**  *Where supervisors are weighted 50%/50% and cover more than one Divisional review panel, they may be submitted to both panels. Please indicate if this is the case.*  Yes □  No □  **Interdisciplinary projects beyond the Arts and Humanities**  *We will fund interdisciplinary projects where at least 50% of the project falls within the AHRC’s disciplinary domains. Please detail the interdisciplinary nature of the project beyond the arts & humanities.* (200 words max). |

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| *We seek evidence that the applicant and their project will be supported* ***by the*** ***very best team of supervisors and research environment at the University of Stirling****. Each environment and team will be specific to each applicant and their project. Supervisory teams should be clear about the supervision allocation across the team. Lead Supervisor allocation must be more than or equal to the allocation of other supervisor(s) in the team. The DLA will not formally recognise supervisory input of less than 20%.*  *The requirement that all members of the supervisory team list up to 6 relevant outputs is indicative and not intended to discourage early career researchers from acting as Lead, co- or secondary supervisors. SGSAH welcomes and supports the development of ECRs through its DLA programme. ‘Outputs’ refers to publications, practice-based research including performances, exhibitions, compositions, etc.*  **Lead Supervisor**  Name:  Subject/Division:  Email:  Discipline:  ECR (within six years of their first academic appointment): Yes/No  Supervision allocation (please indicate)  75% 󠆸 □  60% □  50% □  Total number of doctoral researchers supervising currently (as FTE):  Total number of doctoral researchers supervising at 1st October 2026 (as FTE):  Up to six most relevant research outputs: |
| **Supervisor 2**  Name:  Email:  Subject/Division:  ECR (within six years of their first academic appointment): Yes/No  Supervision role (i.e. co-supervisor or second supervisor):  Supervision allocation (please indicate)  25% □  20% □  50% □    Total Number of students supervising currently (as FTE):  Total number of doctoral researchers supervising at 1st October 2026 (as FTE):  Up to six most relevant research outputs: |
| **Supervisor 3 (where applicable)**  Name:    Email:    Subject/Division:  ECR (within six years of their first academic appointment): Yes/No  Supervision role (i.e. co-supervisor or third supervisor):  Supervision allocation (please indicate)  20% □  Total Number of students supervising currently (as FTE):  Total number of doctoral researchers supervising at 1st October 2026 (as FTE):  Up to six most relevant research outputs: |

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| **Supervisory Expertise and Research Training Environment** (500 words)   * *Why is this the right supervisory team and research environment (at Divisional/ /Faculty and/or University Level) for this project and this applicant?* * *What will the student/project add to the research environment?* * *What role will each supervisor play in supporting the doctoral researcher and their project?* * *How will the supervision be managed and sustained? (SGSAH actively supports the development of Early Career Researchers. Where an ECR is a member of the supervisory team, please provide details on how the ECR will be mentored/supported in their role.)* |

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| **Confirmation of ITA and Engagement with the DLA Hub.**  *Please indicate below that you have discussed and agreed to the applicant’s planned use of the Individual Training Allowance, and wider training plans, as set out in the application form.*  [tick box] I confirm that the applicant’s ITA and plans for engaging with the Hub have been discussed and approved by the supervisory team.  [tick box] I cannot confirm that the applicant’s ITA and plans for engaging with the Hub have been discussed and approved by the supervisory team. |

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| **Ethics** **& 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.*    [tick box]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*.* □  All supervisors have completed the University of Stirling supervisory training required for their career stage (as either early career, new to Stirling, or experienced supervisors). □ |

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

Applications from nominees 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.

# Assessment criteria for 2026

Nominations submitted to the SGSAH DLA competition are of a very high standard. The majority are of fundable quality and the competition is fierce. 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 and research environment?
* Why this DLA and the resources and training opportunities it provides?

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

**Qualifications OR Relevant Professional Experience**

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| **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 in the Supervisory Statement 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 | 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  **OR** clear evidence in the Supervisory Statement 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. | A strong case is made including evidence of independent research thinking and high-quality output |
| **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. |

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

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| **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 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 ½ years (or 4 years if additional funded research has been requested). 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 requested programme length. 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 to Undertake Doctoral Study and Complete a PhD**

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| **Band** | **Mark** | **Description** |
| **A** | 10  9 | Evidence that the applicant is **exceptionally well-prepared** for **their particular doctoral project** and **to complete a project of this length within the designated time frame**:  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; notable academic or non-academic achievements.);  **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 them to complete the project successfully and has identified training available, making excellent use of their membership of the SGSAH AHRC DLA. |
| **B** | 8  7  6 | Evidence that the applicant is **well-prepared** for **their particular doctoral project** and **to complete a project of this length within the designated time frame** through either:  Previous related study and achievments (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 AHRC DLA. |
| **C** | 5  4  3 | Evidence that the applicant is prepared for **their particular doctoral project** and **to complete a project of this length within the designated time frame** through either:  Previous related study or achievements 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 AHRC DLA. |
| **D** | 2  1 | No evidence that the applicant is prepared for **their particular doctoral project** and **to complete a project of this length within the designated time frame** (e.g. there is no relevance of UG/Masters programmes to the proposed project)  **or**  No relevant professional experience or achievements  **and**  Little indication of familiarisation with the resources and opportunities provided by being a member of the SGSAH AHRC DLA. |

1. **Supervisory Expertise and Research Environment**

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| **Band** | **Mark** | **Description** |
| **A** | 10  9 | Supervision arrangements represent an optimal fit with the student and their proposed research. The supervisory team, in its totality, provides this student with the best possible support available. 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 researchers’ 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 across the University of Stirling 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 University of Stirling. |
| **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. |

1. **Individual Training Allowance and Engagement with the DLA Cohort Training**

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| **Band** | **Mark** | **Description** |
| **A** | 10  9 | Compelling evidence that the specific needs of the applicant have been considered carefully that they will use their Individual Training Allowance and engage with the DLA Cohort Training in a way that is appropriate and relevant. 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 Stirling and the wider SGSAH.  The overall plan is clear and realistic and offers an outstanding PhD Programme for the applicant. |
| **B** | 8  7  6 | There is strong evidence that the specific needs of the applicant have been considered carefully that they will use their Individual Training Allowance and engage with the DLA Cohort Training in a way that is 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, making good use of the resources available across the University of Stirling. |
| **C** | 5  4  3 | There is some sense that the specific needs of the applicant have been considered and that they will use their Individual Training Allowance and engage with the DLA Cohort Training in a way that is appropriate and relevant. However, 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. Little to no detail about ITA use or DLA Cohort Training. |