

Applying for a Collaborative Doctoral Studentship with the British Museum

June 2023

UNRESTRICTED

AHRC COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

The British Museum has three fully funded Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) *Collaborative Doctoral Partnership* studentships to allocate to projects that will start in October 2024. These studentships will run for 48 months (4 years) unless the student is part time.

There is a two-stage process for proposals. Outline applications need to be submitted via online form by 31st August 2023. The Deadline for the full applications for these studentships is 24th November 2023. Any queries and completed project proposal forms should be emailed to: cda@britishmuseum.org

The Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships scheme

Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships are allocations of AHRC funded collaborative research studentships made to a museum, library, archive or heritage organisation, or group of such organisations on a competitive basis for them to allocate to collaborative projects that support their work and research strategy.

The studentships provide an opportunity for a research student to carry out a major piece of research that supports the needs and ambitions of the Museum and leads to a doctorate from a university. Students have the opportunity to base their research at the Museum and learn more about how the cultural heritage sector operates, providing experiences that build towards the future career of the student, often in the Museums sector.

At the British Museum all of our CDP studentships are project-based studentships that are advertised to recruit the best qualified student. We do not accept proposals where there is a named student. Nor do we accept proposals from students seeking to fund their own project. Although these are project-based studentships, all proposals need to allow scope for the student to develop the research within the limits of the project's aims and focus.

Topics are proposed jointly by a member of Museum staff with a colleague from a UK University. The studentships are chosen on their academic strengths, how well they support for the Museum's priorities and how well the proposers are considering the career development of the student.

These studentships are collaborative doctoral studentships, which means they are supervised jointly by someone from a university and someone from the Museum, supported by a wider supervisory team from both organisations. Collaboration is the essential feature of these studentships. Joint supervision means both lead

supervisors actively shaping the project and supporting the student to undertake the research to the successful completion of the studentship. The university lead supervisor is specifically responsible for the university processes around the studentship. The museum lead supervisor is specifically responsible for the student's research with, and time spent in, the Museum. We recommend that the lead supervisors are actively supported by second supervisors at both organisations. They are there to take on the lead supervisory roles if needed but should also be seen as active members of the supervisory team.

The studentships are administered by the universities, with AHRC funds supporting academic fees and student maintenance paid directly to them, with the lead University Supervisor as the named Grant Award Holder.

The British Museum provides additional financial support for travel and related research costs of up to £1,500 a year to the student. Travel by BM supervisors to attend joint supervisions at the University is also covered by the British Museum Research Fund.

The students will be part of a large group of research students at the Museum, as well the larger cohort of students across all the cultural and heritage organisations who support CDP students. The consortium of all the CDP partner organisations work closely together to provide a joint cohort development programme of events and training (see <http://www.ahrc-cdp.org/>).

The studentship is a fully funded AHRC research studentship with funds to cover the student's tuition fees, maintenance (living costs) and some funds to support research costs. The studentship covers four years (948 months) of tuition fees and maintenance, pro-rated for part-time students. It is anticipated that this four-year period will include some time spent on professional career development opportunities. This could be a placement, attending a training course, or doing something else that adds to the student's C.V. These studentships are covered by standard AHRC rules and guidance for the research students they fund and support. Please see the AHRC website for further information.

How to Apply

Applications for these studentships are made together by a member of Museum staff and an academic member of staff from a UK University.

There is a two-stage process has been designed to identify appropriate topics for research and to provide support to develop proposals.

Stage 1: Expressions of Interest. Both supervisors work to submit a brief outline of; the proposed topic, who the supervisors will be, and how this fits the priorities for studentships. **Online form to be submitted by 31st August 2023.**

Stage 2: Full Project Proposal. A short-list of up to 6 projects will be asked to develop a full application proposal for Stage 2. **The deadline for full applications will be Friday 24th November.**

All Expressions of Interest will be reviewed by the Head of Research and members of the Research Board. If your proposal is chosen to move forward to Stage 2 you will be supported in developing the Expression of Interest into a full Project Proposal.

Full applications will be considered by a panel that will meet no later than the second week of January. The panel includes staff from UK Universities, other Museums, as well as British Museum staff. It will assess and grade each proposal. The full application form asks for information about the project, how it will be supervised, potential areas for career development opportunities for the student, and why the project supports the Museum's priorities. Parts of the application form can be copied and pasted into the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Je-S form (joint electronic system), if the application is successful. The applicants, and the AHRC, will be notified of the outcome of the panel as soon as possible.

The panel decision is provisional as the AHRC will need to confirm that the proposals fit within their subject

area remit. The AHRC will carry out a subject area remit check. If the project is compliant, the AHRC will set up a form on Je-S (joint electronic system) used by UKRI to administer grants and awards. This Je-S form needs to be filled in by the university lead supervisor, with help from the BM, by a pre-determined deadline.

Once submitted to AHRC this will lead to a formal offer letter for the studentship being sent to the University supervisor and University.

A formal legal agreement for the studentship will need to be put in place. A standard agreement exists and will be provided by the Museum's Research Manager. We ask for outline agreement to be reached with the university research office about the wording of the agreement before the Je-S form is submitted.

Subject area remit: The topic for the studentship must fall inside the [subject area remit of the Arts & Humanities Research Council](#). These can be found in Section 7 of the AHRC Research Funding Guide. Project proposals looking at a science or social science subject must demonstrate they are answering arts and humanities questions. Please ask for advice if this is a concern.

Assessment Criteria: The applications will be assessed against the following criteria;

- **Academic quality**
- **How well they support the British Museum's priorities**
- **The proposed opportunities to develop the student's future career**

The British Museum's Priorities for Collaborative Doctoral Studentships: All successful studentship projects will be focused on supporting the current and future priorities of the British Museum. Across these priorities, the selection panel will look for:

- *Projects that have a clear relevance to future exhibitions and/or the development of future permanent galleries.*
- *Projects that will improve the care, conservation, presentation and use of the collections in areas such as such as learning and working with others.*
- *Projects that critically examine the history of the Museum's collection and the institution.*
- *Projects that build on and support the Museum's work internationally and across the UK.*
- *Projects that focus on under-researched parts of the collection*

While welcoming applications covering the above priorities, this year we particularly encourage project proposals that focus on the area of museum practice. These could include, but are not limited to:

- **Partnership and co-curation**
- **Audiences**
- **Conservation and collection care**
- **Examining curatorial practice**
- **Digital collections**

Across all these foci, the selection panel will look for projects *that develop new approaches and methodologies* for research in these areas. While there must be a clear focus on the British Museum, its collections and work, strong proposals will set these in wider contexts where appropriate. Experience also suggests that if a project has too narrow a focus it can be more difficult to attract potential students.

When you are completing both the Expression of Interest and the Full Project Proposal Forms you should keep in mind the following:

- The importance and originality of the topic
- The scope for potential innovation
- The relevant collections and/or expertise at The British Museum
- The feasibility of the project as a PhD rather than an extended research project
- The British Museum Research Strategy
- Existing or future work at The British Museum

Student Professional Development

An important aspect of the CDP scheme is the opportunity the student has for professional development during the course of their PhD. These studentships are as much about developing the student's career as they are developing new research. For this new round of AHRC CDP funding there is no longer a part of the student's stipend that is dedicated to career development activities. Instead, the AHRC are offering a full 48 months of funding.

Studentship applications are expected to consider the likely career paths of the student (considering that most CDP students have often had relevant career experience before starting their research and see the PhD as an opportunity to develop their career). Applications need to show that the supervisors are thinking through the potential development opportunities that can be supported through the studentship.

All students are still expected to spend a period of the studentship on career development activities. These can be work placements, delivering impacts from their research or training opportunities. These opportunities can include delivering a small exhibition from the PhD research for the British Museum; intensive language courses; learning new scientific techniques; placements to gain curatorial, conservation or science skills in areas outside those specifically covered by the research; etc.

These opportunities can take the form of specific 'blocks' of activity (e.g. placements, language courses) or can be spread across a longer period of time (e.g. cataloguing projects). Such opportunities should, ideally, take place within years 1 to 3 of the project, with the final year focused on the completion of the research and submission of the PhD thesis (adjusted for part-time students).

Where any such opportunities incur direct costs during CDP4, the AHRC anticipate that these will be covered by an enhanced Research Training Support Grant, the student's stipend, and/or the research support offered by the Partner Organisation. Please do keep the Research Manager informed of any activity taking place and any costs that have been incurred.

Supervisor Guidance

Becoming a lead supervisor on a PhD project means a significant commitment of 4-5% of the British Museum supervisor's time for the full 4 years of the project. Supervisors must be contracted to be working at the British Museum for the full term of the studentship in order to provide project and supervisory stability. All CDP students should have a second Museum supervisor who will be actively involved with the project and can act as the lead supervisor, if required. This person can be on a Fixed Term Contract.

Students are expected to meet with both their British Museum and Higher Education Institution supervisors at least once a month at the British Museum or the HEI. As stated above, travel by BM supervisors to attend joint supervisions at the University is also covered by the British Museum Research Fund.

Applications from early career researchers / more inexperienced members of staff to be supervisors are encouraged as long as assurances are given that they will be mentored and supported by more experienced members of staff. You do not have to have completed a PhD to supervise a Collaborative Doctoral Programme PhD.

Expression of Interest form

This form should be filled out jointly between a named member of staff from the British Museum and a named member of staff from a Higher Education Institution (HEI). The Expression of Interest form should give a brief outline of the proposed topic, who the supervisors will be, how this fits the priorities for studentships for the BM and what resources will be needed. As with all CDP Studentships, the proposal must clearly support the research strategy of The British Museum and must be suitable for PhD-level research.

This has been developed as a digital form, please complete all the sections of the form and it will be automatically sent once you click the submit button. You will be able to print or save your answers on submission. Please do email cda@britishmuseum.org if there are any issues with this.

This form should be submitted by the **31st August 2023**.

The Full Project Proposal Form

The full project proposal should be developed by the two co-supervisors with support from the Head of Research. The full project proposal form has guidance for each of the sections to be completed. If this proposal is successful, the HEI co-supervisor will be asked by AHRC to fill in a studentship proposal form on the Je-S (Joint electronic Submissions System). To help fill in this form for the AHRC many of the sections in the BM proposal form are the same or similar to those on the Je-S form. Further information about next steps will be provided to successful applicants.

This form should be submitted by the **24th November 2023**.

A note on the UKRI's new Funding Portal

Throughout this guidance and in the Full Project Proposal Form we refer to the UKRI/AHRC's Joint Electronic Submission Service (Je-S). The UKRI are currently transitioning from the Je-S service to their new UKRI grants system, the Funding Service. This change is happening over the course of 2023 and they anticipate that this will be complete by January 2024. It is, therefore, likely that these new CDP studentships will be submitted through the new Funding Service rather than Je-S. However, we have not been informed of when studentships will be transferred or if there will be any major changes to the submission of studentship proposals, we are not anticipating that there will be. We are therefore continuing with the guidance we would normally give for the Je-S forms and will inform successful applicants of any changes as soon as we are made aware of them.