

South and East Network of Social Sciences (SENSS) Doctoral Training Partnership

2024/25 COLLABORATIVE STUDENTSHIP APPLICATION: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR OCTOBER 2024 ENTRY

A brief summary of the application process

Please read these guidance notes in full before submitting your SENSS application and, in particular, note the following:

1. You do not need to have a Masters degree to apply. The structure and length of the studentship awarded is dependent on the skills you require to successfully deliver your PhD project. To help us determine this, as part of your application, you will be asked questions relating to your previous training and experience as well as training you think you will need during your studies.
2. Studentships are offered on a full- or part-time basis. The minimum length of studentship SENSS will award is a +3.5-year award, whilst the maximum length of studentship is +4.5 years.
3. **You must complete and submit your PhD within your funded award period. That is, if you are awarded a +3.5 studentship, you must submit your PhD by the end of the 3.5-year period.**
4. The deadline for applying to your chosen university for a postgraduate place is noted for each project. If you are unsure of the deadline or how to apply for a place, please check with the supervisor or Operational Lead at your chosen university. We strongly advise you to apply several weeks before this to allow sufficient time to complete the four application stages.
Once you have applied to your chosen university for a PhD place, you must apply for SENSS ESRC funding. The deadline for submitting your SENSS application is **12:00pm GMT on Monday 11 March 2024.**
5. There are four stages to making a SENSS application. To submit a SENSS studentship application, you must:
 - a. Discuss your potential application with the project supervisor;
 - b. Check your eligibility (see p.6, below) and if eligible, apply to the university where the research project is based for a postgraduate place;
 - c. Next, complete the online application to apply for a SENSS studentship. Printouts and other forms of the application will not be accepted; and,
 - d. In completing your SENSS online application, please note the criteria on p.9, as your application will be judged according to these.

There is no limit on the number of supervisor-led studentship applications you can make, provided you are eligible for each of these. If you also wish to apply to the student-led competition, you may do so, but you are only permitted to submit ONE application to that competition. Click [here](#) for further information about the student-led competition.

6. Please note that, if you are short-listed for a collaborative studentship, the project supervisor will ask you to attend an interview.

Collaborative studentships

The nine supervisor-led research projects commence in October 2024 are:

1. Sustainability and Resilience of the UK Fishing Fleet

Primary supervisor: Prof. Corrado Di Maria

Institution: University of East Anglia

SENSS Theme: Sustainability and Climate Emergency

Collaborative partners: CEFAS, Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and Seafish

2. Warming the heart: identifying how transforming tropical fire discourses can contribute towards more effective and equitable governance

Primary supervisor: Dr Rachel Carmenta

Institution: University of East Anglia

SENSS Theme: Sustainability and Climate Emergency

Collaborative partner: CEMADEM

3. Instigating compassionate and father-inclusive support for young men who are fathers: capturing and evaluating the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme

Primary supervisor: Prof. Anna Tarrant

Institution: University of Lincoln

SENSS Theme: Justice, Institutions and Social Change

Collaborative partner: FutureMen

4. Understanding the Use of Evidence in Civil Service Policy Making

Primary supervisor: Prof. Kevin Daniels

Institution: University of East Anglia

SENSS Theme: Justice, Institutions and Social Change

Collaborative partner: Evaluation Task Force (ETF) a joint unit of the Cabinet Office and Treasury

5. Intersectionality and identity: Gender identity and ethnicity in autism and personality disorder

Primary supervisor: Prof. Jacqueline Sin

Institution: City, University of London

SENSS Theme: Health, Well-being and Social Care

Collaborative partner: IMPACTT

6. Creativity, curiosity and professional artists in schools

Primary supervisor: Dr Diana Omigie

Institution: Goldsmiths, University of London

SENSS Theme: Justice, Institutions and Social Change

Collaborative partner: Curious Minds

7. Community-based co-design of small-scale wastewater systems

Primary supervisor: Dr Heather Smith

Institution: Cranfield University

SENSS Theme: Sustainability and Climate Emergency

Collaborative partner: Scottish Water

8. Implementing flood performance certification: Facilitating societal resilience through the use of property flood resilience

Primary supervisor: Prof. Sally Priest

Institution: Middlesex University

SENSS Theme: Sustainability and Climate Emergency

Collaborative partner: Flood Re

9. Determining the Potential of Hydrogen Towns (DePHT)

Primary supervisor: Dr Elisabeth Shrimpton

Institution: Cranfield University

SENSS Theme: Sustainability and Climate Emergency

Collaborative partner: Cadent Gas Ltd

USING HEIAPPLY, SENSS' ONLINE APPLICATION PLATFORM

- The links for each studentship competition are available via the SENSS website. Please click [here](#) to go to our website and, after reading about SENSS studentships in general, scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the collaborative studentship picture. This will take you to the collaborative studentship page, from where you can start your application.

THE HEIAPPLY ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS

This process consists of completing the following tasks:

- The application form; and,
- The equal opportunities form.
- You will also be asked to upload some documents to support your application once you have completed writing your application.

SECTION 1: HEIAPPLY DASHBOARD

- The Dashboard is where you will land when signing in to HEIapply after creating an account. It will show your application ID, as well as the status of your application (e.g. what percentage of the application process you have completed).
- Click on “**Application Tracker**” in order to see where your application currently is in the SENSS competition process.
- To work on your application, click on “**View Application**”.
- About halfway down the Dashboard page, you will see the heading “**Tasks**”: this is where you will find the **Equal Opportunities form**, which you must complete in order to be able to submit your application (for further information about this form, see p.15).
- Near the bottom of the Dashboard page, you will see the “**Communication Inbox**”:
 - If SENSS sends you any messages, these will show up here.
 - If you would like to send us a message with a query, please click on “Collaborative Competition - Student Phase”, type in your message, and click on “Send”. We will respond as soon as possible.

If you plan to apply for both a collaborative and/or student-led studentship, you can do so by clicking on the grey box in the top right-hand corner “**Apply for another competition**”.

SECTION 2: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR THE SENSS COLLABORATIVE STUDENT PHASE APPLICATION

These Guidance Notes are also available to you in section 2 of the HEIapply portal. You can return to these at any time, or download them from the [SENSS website](#), to ensure you are providing the information essential to your application.

PLEASE READ THESE NOTES, AS THEY WILL SUPPORT YOU IN WRITING AN EXCELLENT APPLICATION. YOU MUST ALSO CONSULT YOUR PROPOSED PRIMARY SUPERVISOR IN DRAFTING YOUR APPLICATION.

Each question you will be asked is included below and is followed by some guidance on how best to answer that question.

SECTION 3: STUDENTSHIP PATH

Contacting the proposal primary supervisor (required)

Question: You will be asked if you have already contacted the primary supervisor for the project for which you are applying.

Notes

- If you have already been in direct contact with the primary supervisor for this project, answer “**Yes**”. *Click on “Save and continue” to go to the Section 2 of the application form.*
If you answer “**No**”, please contact the primary supervisor, tell them who you are, and that you are interested in applying for their project. They can help you decide if their project is the right one for you.
- ***Please do not proceed with your application until you have contacted the primary supervisor.***

SECTION 4: PERSONAL DETAILS

Question: You will be asked to:

- Provide your home address;
- State whether you would like to study full- or part-time; and,
- Confirm your residential status.

Notes

Home address (required)

- Please provide your home address at the point of application. That is, the address at which you are ordinarily resident during most of the year.

Mode of study (required)

- SENSS offers both **full-time** (usually 37.5 hours per week) and **part-time** study (usually 18 hours per week, but some universities may allow you to study more than 18 hours per week part-time).
- For example, if you are awarded a +3.5 PhD, if you study full-time, you will study for 3.5 years, by the end of which you must submit your PhD. If you are awarded a +3.5 PhD and study part-time, you will study for 7 years, by the end of which you must submit your PhD.
- The project details on the SENSS website indicate if the project you are interested in can be studied on a part-time basis.
- Please note, however, that you can **change your mode of study** once during your studentship, if you meet certain conditions.

Residential eligibility rules (required)

- Everyone is eligible to apply for these **fully funded studentships**, regardless of where they live, or their nationality/citizenship.
- However, SENSS is **limited by the ESRC** to awarding a maximum of 30% of the total number of studentship awards we make. This equates to approximately 10-12 studentships which can be awarded to international applicants each year. For further information from the ESRC on residential eligibility, please click [here](#).
- You must check your residential status, as you will need to indicate whether you are a **home** or an **international** applicant.
- To be a **home** student, you 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 you do not meet any of the criteria above, you are classed as an **international student**.
- If you have any questions about your residential status, please contact your chosen university's [SENSS Operational Lead](#).
- All successful applicants, whether home or international, will be awarded a full SENSS ESRC-funded studentship award, which includes the following:
 - Your university tuition fees will be paid in full. You will never be required to pay tuition fees during your funded award;
 - A tax-free maintenance stipend (salary) to pay your living costs which is set at £18,622 per year for the 2023-24 academic year. For those studying at universities based in London, there is an additional payment of £2,000 which is termed "London Weighting", given that the cost of living is higher in

London. This means you will be paid £20,622 p.a. If you are not studying at a London-based university, but still choose to live in London, you will not receive this additional payment;

- You will be eligible to apply for:
 - Research training support grant funds of up to £940 per year; and,
 - Funding for overseas fieldwork, overseas institutional visits, and language training.
- Please note that you cannot hold a SENSS studentship and another scholarship at the same time, except in exceptional circumstances. If you have been, or may be, offered another scholarship, please immediately contact your [SENSS Operational Lead](#) for advice.

Click 'Save and Continue' to move to the next section of the application form.

SECTION 5: STUDENTSHIP DETAILS

Declaration regarding studentship structure (required)

Question: You will be asked to confirm that you understand that the final decision regarding the studentship structure you will be offered lies with SENSS

- The decision regarding which structure of studentship you will be offered by SENSS will be based on the information you provide in your application form about the skills your past training and professional experience have provided you with, as well as recommendations from your proposed supervisor and the relevant SENSS Thematic Group which will review your application.
- If SENSS determines that you do not already have the required skills to deliver your research project, it will offer you a longer studentship award to ensure you have time to develop those skills.

Concurrent funding applications

Question: You will be asked if you are making a separate application for any other funded studentships.

Notes

- Please indicate whether you are also applying for any other funded studentship at any other university, or any other studentship funded by UKRI (the umbrella body for all UK Research Councils, including the ESRC).
- This is for information only and **will not prejudice your application to SENSS in any way.**

You will next be asked about your research proposal.

Research Proposal

- You **must** discuss your application with your primary supervisor before submitting it.
- However, it is your responsibility to write your own application, that is, it **must not be written by anyone else, such as your supervisor**. Past experience shows that it can be easy to detect a proposal that has been written, or even partly written, by a supervisor rather than the applicant. If this appears to be the case, your proposal may receive a lower score, or may be excluded from the competition altogether.
- It is also important to demonstrate that you can **express your ideas in clear and precise English**, in such a way that someone who is an academic, but not a specialist in the subject area, can understand.
- **Tip:** we suggest that you draft your answers for this section using Word (or equivalent) which can count characters and cut and paste them into the application form when you are happy with them, to ensure you stick to the character limit. This limit includes spaces and other punctuation.

Question: You will be asked why you are applying for this studentship?

Notes

Please address the following issues in setting out why you are applying for this collaborative studentship. You have a maximum of 30,000 characters for this section.

- Why you are applying for this particular studentship;
- Why you think you are well-suited to this project, and to working with this specific collaborative partner;
- Explain your understanding of the potential contribution the project is expected to make to relevant academic fields, and its potential impact outside academia; and,
- Describe how well prepared you are for taking up this studentship, in terms of your prior research training and/or professional experience.

In writing your proposal, please refer to the selection criteria, below, by which your application will be judged.

SENSS COLLABORATIVE STUDENTSHIP COMPETITION SELECTION CRITERIA

Collaborative (Student phase)	Definition
Evidence of applicant's suitability ("fit") for this research project (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic grounding in substantively relevant discipline • Applicants' interests and experiences linked to collaborative setting and/or wider goals of the project
Preparedness and potential of applicant, including in collaborative contexts (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of achievement, progression and/or potential in studies to date • Relevant experience (within- or extra-curricular) of and/or interest in research beyond academia • Enthusiasm of supervisor's supporting statement
Evidence that applicant's training needs, and placement have been properly identified and planned for (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative partner has clear plan for supervising/ advising researcher • Consideration given to methodological demands and hence training needs • Role and scope of placement clearly outlined

Resourcing

Question: Is your project is able to be delivered within the Research Training Support Grant funding available, noting that you can apply for up to £940 per year for this purpose?

Notes

- Please note that simply stating in your application that you require additional resources does not guarantee that you will receive all the funds you have noted if your application is successful. You will have to apply for this funding once your studentship starts.
- **Please talk to the supervisor of this project before answering this question, as they will be able to advise what training you may need to take or any training related costs which need to be included here.**
- In brief, you will be able to apply for **up to £940 per year** (or up to approximately £3,200 across the lifetime of your studentship award) for costs incurred directly in support of your research (**excluding** overseas fieldwork – which is funded separately).
- If you are intending to undertake **fieldwork in the UK**, and this will cost more than £940 per year (or more than approximately £3,200 across the lifetime of your studentship award), please include these costs in your application. If your

project includes UK-based fieldwork, you will be able to apply for additional funding for things such as conference attendance.

- Aside from UK fieldwork costs, RTSG funding covers things such as interviewing participants, travel, attending conferences, accessing datasets, language lesson costs etc.
- **If you will need more than £940 per year, you will need to set out in your application why you will need more funding, what it is for, and what it will cost.**

Overseas fieldwork (OFW)

Please talk to the supervisor of this project before answering this question as the project will determine whether you will be required to undertake any overseas fieldwork. If the project does not include overseas fieldwork, simply answer no, and move on to the next question. OFW is defined as conducting fieldwork **anywhere outside the UK.**

Question: Do you plan to undertake overseas fieldwork as part of your research project?

- If you answer “No”, *you will be asked next whether you require language training.*
- If you answer “Yes”, please read the notes below and answer the following additional questions:
 - Which country you intend to conduct your fieldwork in
 - How long you will need to spend in this country to complete your fieldwork
 - How much you estimate it will cost to undertake this fieldwork in total
 - Provide an itemised list of the costs you are likely to incur.

Notes

- You will need to draw up a clear budget for your OFW that itemises all the costs you will incur (flights, visa, vaccinations etc.) with a brief justification for each. Please be realistic when drawing up your fieldwork budget. That is, **please do not significantly under- or over-cost it.** Those reviewing your SENSS application form will assess whether your research project is feasible in light of your plan and budget for conducting OFW.
- If you are awarded a SENSS Studentship, you will still need to submit a formal, more detailed application, supported by your supervisor, for funding for OFW once you have started your studies, as this funding will not be automatically paid to you.

Language training

Please talk to the supervisor of this project before answering this question as the project will determine whether you will be required to undertake any language training. If the project does not include language training, simply answer no, and move on to the next question.

Question: Does your research project require you to undertake language training?

- If you answer “No”, *you will be asked next about your research methods training/skills.*
- If you answer “Yes”, you will be asked additional questions about your language training:
 - What language will you need to learn?
 - Do you anticipate requiring a funded extension to your studentship in order to learn this language?
 - How long an extension do you think you will need (in months)? Please base this on the ESRC guidance on extensions for language learning.

Notes

- It is possible to be granted an extension to your funding for up to one year if you need to acquire or develop a working ability with a language where this is **crucial** to the success of your research. If you are planning to spend extended time in the field, **you are expected to be competent in a language which is used in the area in which you will be based.**
- If you need to learn a language, you will need to check whether this language qualifies for an extension and, if so, for how long. Please refer to Annex 2 on page 41 of the [ESRC's Postgraduate Funding Guide](#) for this information. (Please note that the ESRC refers to learning **any** language as “difficult language training”.)
- Please discuss this with your supervisor. In doing so, you will need to consider issues such as whether you will need to develop competence in a local dialect, the level of competence you need to achieve in this language to carry out your research etc.
- Those reviewing your SENSS application form will assess whether your research project is feasible in light of the language training you propose to undertake. In exceptional circumstances, we may require further evidence that you will be capable of learning the language in the time available.
- If you are awarded a SENSS studentship, you will need to submit a more detailed application, supported by your supervisor, for an extension to your funding on the basis of needing to learn or develop a language, as this will not be granted automatically.

Prior Education

Question: You will be asked to provide details of your previous education and training, including your undergraduate degree, your Masters degree (if you have one, or are currently studying for one).

Notes

- You must complete this section.
- For each higher education qualification you hold, please provide the information outlined below. To assist you, examples of undergraduate and Masters degrees are provided on the application form. Please click on the “i” in the purple circle to see this example.
 - Qualification and title of award;
 - Name of university/institution studied at;
 - Name of country in which this university/institution is situated;
 - Month and year that the programme started;
 - Month and year that the programme has been/will be completed; and,
 - Degree classification (where awarded), or marks obtained for completed modules.
- If you have already started your PhD, for the “degree classification” line, please state whether, at your last supervisory board meeting (or equivalent), your progress was satisfactory or not.
- You will also be asked if you completed a thesis/dissertation as part of your undergraduate and/or Masters degree.

Your Past Research Methods Training

You will be asked a series of questions in order to determine which section of the application form you need to complete next.

Notes

- You must complete this section, reflecting on all the training you have received to date, including through formal education or through professional experience.
- There are seven elements of research methods training to be assessed. For each of these seven elements, there is a list of all the types of training you may have undergone or where your professional/work experience may have covered these:
 - The use of software;
 - Academic communication;
 - Research design;
 - Basic scientific method;
 - Qualitative research methods;
 - Quantitative research methods; and,
 - General research knowledge and skills.
- Please use specific examples of modules/courses where you have covered relevant training.
- If you are not sure how to answer this section, please seek your proposed supervisor’s advice.

Prior Life / Work Experience

You will be asked a series of questions to determine to determine what skills you have already developed in certain areas.

- You must complete this section.
- Please reflect on all the training you have received to date, including through formal education or through professional experience.
- Please use specific examples of modules/courses where you have covered relevant training.
- If you are not sure how to answer this section, please seek your proposed supervisor's advice.

Future Development and Training Needs

You will be asked a series of questions to determine to determine what development and training needs you may have.

- You must complete this section.
- When considering your project, please reflect on if you have any training and development gaps in the following areas:
 - Knowledge and intellectual abilities
 - Personal effectiveness
 - Research governance and organisation
 - Engagement, influence, and impact
- If you are not sure how to answer this section, please seek your proposed supervisor's advice.

Personal Statement

Please read the notes below carefully in drafting your statement, for which there is a **maximum of 3,500 characters**.

Question: You will be asked to provide a personal statement, addressing the issues set out in the guidance below.

Notes

- **Please give your reasons for applying.** In doing so, please address the following:
 - Why you think you should be awarded a studentship;

- Why you wish to study with SENSS specifically, and how you plan to take advantage of the opportunities SENSS offers its students; and,
- Your preparedness for the demands of postgraduate life by discussing your passion for your topic, as well as your existing academic, professional, and life knowledge and experience.
- **What are your career goals:** in particular, tell us about your long-term career ambitions, and how a SENSS studentship relates to these.
- **Your preparation for further study:** discuss how your undergraduate and/or Masters degree, as well as any life or professional experience you have, has prepared you for your proposed research project.
- **Your wider skillset:**
 - Highlight your relevant skills and knowledge that will enable you to make an impact and explain what that impact will be.
 - Summarise your abilities in core areas related to your research project, including IT, organisation, communication, time management, and critical thinking.
 - Make reference to any grades you have achieved, awards you have won, placements you have undertaken, or conferences you have attended which have either helped prepare you for your research project, or which make you a great candidate for a SENSS studentship.

Declaration

Please read the declaration carefully and tick the box to confirm you accept these terms and conditions.

SECTION 6: UPLOAD YOUR DOCUMENTS

Question: You will be asked to upload all the documents needed to support your application.

Notes

Documents to be uploaded include the following:

- **Degree certificates and/or degree award letters:** please scan your degree certificates or official award letters and upload these.
- **Please do not upload documents other than those listed above.** For example, please do not upload a cv, any articles you have written, any letters of reference etc. **We will not read these.**
- Please give each document a **title** which reflects what it contains e.g. a student named Aaliyah Smith who is uploading their undergraduate degree certificate could call it “ASmith undergrad degree cert.”
- Upload documents only as the following **file types** .doc, .docx, .pdf or .jpeg/.jpg.

- Once you have uploaded your documents, scroll to the very bottom of the page to see a list of documents that you have **successfully uploaded**. Please check that all your necessary documents are listed there.

SECTION 7: SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

- This section will list (in a red box below the declaration) any sections of your application which you have not completed, or if you have exceeded the character limits set for any sections.
- If you have not already completed the Equal Opportunities form, this will also be indicated in the red box. Please click on the link to complete this form.
- Once you have completed the entire form, and uploaded all the relevant documents, please read the terms and conditions for making this application and tick the box.
- You will then be able to submit your application for consideration for a studentship. **Please note, you will not be able to amend your application once it has been submitted.**

COMPLETING THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORM

You will need to complete the Equal Opportunities form if you have not already done so via “Tasks” on your HEIapply home page. Once you have completed the rest of your application, a notification will appear in the red box below the declaration for you to complete this form. Please click on the link and complete it. If you do not do so, you will not be able to submit your application.

SENSS is committed to an Equal Opportunities Policy, and we acknowledge and embrace diversity.

SENSS and the ESRC are committed to ensuring that those applying for studentships are selected on the basis of merit. By completing this form, you will help us to ensure that our policies and procedures are effective in avoiding discrimination and promoting equal opportunities in awarding studentships.

SENSS needs your help and co-operation to enable it to do this. Filling in this form is not voluntary but, if there are questions you do not wish to answer, you have the option of ticking “prefer not to say.” The information you provide will be used for monitoring and statistical purposes only, will stay confidential, and be stored securely. Access to this information will be limited to the core SENSS staff members.

The information you provide on this form will not be released to those involved in making the decision on who receives a studentship.

ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED YOUR APPLICATION

Reminder: the deadline for submitting your application is **12:00pm GMT on Monday 11 March 2024.**

Next steps

- There are two review phases in our supervisor-led collaborative studentship competition. You will be advised at each stage whether your application has been successful and is therefore progressing to the next stage of the competition:
 - First phase: your application will be assessed a selection **panel consisting of the first and second supervisor for the project, as well as a representative from the collaborative partner**. The panel will agree a shortlist of candidates to be interviewed for the studentship. You will be advised during the week commencing 18 March 2024 whether you will be offered an interview, which will take place during weeks commencing 25 March 2024 and 1 April 2024. If your application is successful at interview, it will go to the second and final round of the competition.
 - Second and final phase: the **SENSS Management Board members** will review and approve the studentship awards by 24 April 2024. You will be notified of the outcome by the end of April at the latest.
- If your application is approved by the SENSS Management Board, you will be advised by email by the end of April whether you have been awarded a studentship.
- Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with some constructive feedback. However, SENSS is not able to provide in-depth feedback due to the number of applications we receive.