

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

### Student-Led Studentship Application: Guidance notes for October 2024 entry

Please read these guidance notes before submitting your SENSS application and note the following:

- Your research proposal must come within one at least one of the [six SENSS Themes](#). Ideally, your research proposal will be **inter-disciplinary** in nature, that is, it will use theories and approaches from more than one research discipline.
- You do **not** need to have a Masters degree to apply for a studentship. 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.
- The **minimum length of studentship SENSS will award is a +3.5-year award**, whilst the **maximum length of studentship is +4.5 years**.
  - All awards include three months for undertaking a placement, which is mandatory. A placement involves you going to work with a host organisation for an agreed period on a defined project or research area. Placements can be flexibly designed to meet the needs of the project, as well as your individual training and development needs.
- **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 3.5 years.**
- All studentships are offered on a **full- or part-time** basis.
- **All studentships are fully funded, regardless of your residential eligibility status (home or international) and** include the following for the duration of your funded award:
  - Your university tuition fees: these will be paid by SENSS to your home university. You will not be required to pay any tuition fees during your funded award;

- A tax-free maintenance stipend to pay your living costs: this is currently set at £18,622 per year for the 2023-24 academic year. For those studying at SENSS universities based in London, there is an additional £2,000 per year paid as London Weighting, given that the cost of living is seen as being higher for those living in London. If you are not studying at a London-based university, but still choose to live in London, you will not receive the London Weighting payment;
- You will also be eligible to apply for other funding, including:
  - Research training support grant funds of up to £940 per year; and,
  - Funding for overseas fieldwork, overseas institutional visits, language training, and placements/internships etc.
- Please note that you **cannot hold a SENSS studentship and another scholarship/studentship at the same time**, except in exceptional circumstances. If you have been, or think you will be, offered another scholarship, please immediately contact your [SENSS Operational Lead](#) for advice.
- There are **three stages to making a SENSS application**:
  - a) First, apply to your chosen [SENSS university](#) for a postgraduate place. **Check with your chosen university for the deadline it has set for applying for a post-graduate place, as these deadlines fall earlier in the year than the SENSS deadline.** We strongly advise you to apply several weeks before this to allow sufficient time to complete your application.
  - b) Second, discuss your application with your proposed supervisor who will be required to provide advice and write a supporting statement for your SENSS application; and,
  - c) Third, apply for a SENSS studentship via HEIapply (the SENSS online application platform). Print outs and other forms of the application will not be accepted). This is a separate application from the one you must make to your chosen university. The deadline for submitting your SENSS application is **12.00 GMT on Friday 9 February 2024**. In drafting this application, read the selection criteria on p.13, as your application will be judged according to these criteria.
- SENSS is holding **three webinars** for prospective students, to support you in crafting the best application possible. These will be held via Zoom on:
  - Thursday 30 November 12:00 – 14:00  
<https://essex-university.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEId--tpz0tE91iQ3Tq7rAWLCAVcWGIRvfM>
  - Wednesday 13 December 18:00 – 20:00  
<https://essex-university.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAsc-2sqjMsEtwUKoUynae4ICUIWnfQzHv>
  - Saturday 16 December 11:00 – 12:00  
<https://essex-university.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEkde2urjopH90FFtG3XLI04qphn96XlqDd>

**To register for one of these webinars, please click on the link above and follow the instructions. We will record one of these webinars so, if you are unable to attend any, you will be able to watch one (a link will be posted on the [SENSS website](#)).**

- You are only permitted to submit ONE application for a **student-led studentship** beginning in 2024 at ONE SENSS university. If you submit more than one application, or to more than one SENSS university, you may be disqualified from the competition. However, there is **no limit** on the number of **collaborative studentship applications** you can make in addition to one student-led application, provided you are eligible for each of these. For further information, please visit the [SENSS website](#).
- Please note that your university will ask you to attend an **interview** (virtual or face-to-face) in respect of your applications for both your PhD place at that university and your SENSS studentship.

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## USING HEIAPPLY

- The link for applying for a studentship via HEIapply is available [here](#).

## 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 the “**Application Tracker**” 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 to be able to submit your application (for further information about this form, see p.22).
- 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 “Student Led” (see the screenshot below), type in your message, and click on “Send”. We’ll respond as soon as possible.

### Communication Inbox

Send and receive communication from our administration team below. To respond to a message or ask a question, simply select the application you want to communicate in relation to, and type your message.

View messages relating to

All Student Led

Send

Read? Message

## THE ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS

You will need to complete the following tasks as part of our online application process:

- The application form; and,
- The equal opportunities form.
- You will also be asked to upload documents (e.g your undergraduate degree certificate) to support your application once you have completed writing your application.
- In addition, your proposed primary supervisor must write a supporting statement, and this must also be completed by the competition deadline (**12.00 GMT on Friday 9 February 2024**). **If this statement is not received by the deadline, your application will not be considered.** Please allow plenty of time for your supervisor to prepare and submit their statement.

If you plan to apply for both a student-led and a collaborative studentship, you can do so by clicking on the grey box in the top right-hand corner “**Apply for another competition**”. Please note that the collaborative studentship competition will only open on 10 January 2024.

## SECTION 2: GUIDANCE NOTES STUDENT PHASE APPLICATION

These Guidance Notes are 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

*Question:* Which [SENSS university](#) will you study at?

This will become your “home” university. You are only permitted to make **one application in the student-led competition to one SENSS university.**

Question: Which [SENSS Thematic Area](#) will you study under?

- You will be asked to name the Thematic Area you are applying to, as well as the academic disciplines your research project covers. A list of the six Themes SENSs offers is available [here](#).
- Please note that some SENSs universities do not offer all six Themes, so make sure that the university you wish to attend offers the Theme you want to study with. **If your proposal does not come within one of these six Themes, you will not be eligible for funding.**
- You will also be asked to name the discipline or disciplines your research project covers.

Question: Have you already identified and contacted your proposed primary supervisor?

- If you have already identified and been in direct contact with your proposed supervisor, answer “Yes”.
- If you answer “No”, **Please do not proceed with your application until you have identified your proposed primary supervisor.**
- We would like to support you in identifying and contacting an academic who will be your supervisor.
  - The best way of doing this is to contact the [SENSs Operational Lead](#) at the university at which you plan to study. When emailing them, please tell them who you are, under which Theme you want to study, and – briefly – what your proposed research topic is. This will help them to refer you to the best person to talk to about your application.
  - **Please do not proceed with your application until you have identified your proposed primary supervisor.**

#### SECTION 4: PERSONAL DETAILS

Question: Please provide your home address

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.

*Question:* Please indicate the basis on which you would like to hold your award

- SENSS offers both full-time (usually 37.5 hours per week) and part-time study (usually 18 hours per week or 0.5FTE, but some universities may allow you to study more than 18 hours 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.
- You can, however, **change your mode of study** once during your studentship, if you meet certain conditions.

*Question:* Have you already started your PhD?

If you answer “**No**”, you will next be asked if you are making any concurrent funding applications.

If you answer “**Yes**”, you will be asked for further information.

- You may apply for a studentship **even if you have already begun your PhD**, provided that, at the start of your award in October 2024, you have **at least 50% of your period of study remaining**. For the purposes of this competition,
- For example, if you originally registered for a +3 PhD and would have completed one year of your PhD at the point at which you take up a studentship award (1 October 2024), you are eligible to apply for SENSS funding. If you would have already completed two years of study by 1 October 2024, you are not eligible for SENSS funding.
- However, **you must also comply with three other conditions:**
  - You must already be studying at one of the SENSS universities; and,
  - Your current research project must come within one of the six SENSS Themes; and,
  - Your current research project will not need to be substantially changed in order to fit within one of the SENSS Themes.
- If your application is successful, you will receive funding for the remainder of your studies. If, by 1 October 2024, you would have completed one year of your PhD, you would receive funding for a further 2.5 years (which includes undertaking a placement).

*Question:* What is your residential status?

- 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 made to international students. 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 in your application whether you are a **home** or an **international** applicant.
- To be a **home** student, you must meet one of 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](#).

## SECTION 5: STUDENTSHIP DETAILS

*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.

*Question:* You will be asked to confirm that you have consulted your proposed primary supervisor in drafting your application

If, by the time you reach this question, you have **not been in contact with your proposed supervisor, please stop your application, and contact them**. Their support for your application is critical, not only in terms of providing you with guidance on your research proposal, but also because they are required to provide a supporting statement for your application as a whole. Without this statement, SENSS will not consider your application for funding.

## Concurrent funding applications

*Question:* Are you making a separate application for any other funded studentships?

- 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), or one which is funded by any other body (e.g. the Leverhulme Trust).
- Please note that **this is for information only and will not prejudice your application to SENSS in any way.**

## Research Proposal

- You **must** discuss your research proposal with your primary supervisor before submitting your application form.
- However, it is your responsibility to write your own research proposal, 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.
- You should approach your proposal as an opportunity to show that you have begun to explore an important area of study, and that your research has the potential to challenge and develop that area.
- 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 your subject area, can understand.
- **Tip:** we suggest that you draft your answers for this section using Word (or equivalent) which can count characters and then cut and paste it into the application form, to ensure you stick to the character limit. This limit includes spaces and other punctuation. To help guide you, generally speaking, the average number of letters in a word is 5 to 6.5

*Question:* Does your research project use advanced quantitative methods (AQM) or Data Skills?

- If you answer “**Yes**”, please explain how you use AQM or Data Skills in your research proposal.
- SENSS ring-fences a number of studentships for students using AQM or Data Skills in their research projects. For an explanation of what you will need to show to be eligible for one of these awards, please see this [SENSS guidance](#).

- If, after reading this, you are not sure whether the quantitative methods you plan to use in your project qualify as “advanced” in your disciplinary field, please talk to your proposed primary supervisor for guidance.

*Question:* What is your research proposal title?

- State the title of your proposed research project (or your current PhD title, if you have already begun your studies).
- Your title must be no more than **150 characters, including spaces between words, and punctuation.**

*Question:* Please provide an abstract, or summary, of your research proposal

- This is limited to a maximum of 4,000 characters, including spaces between words, and punctuation.
- Your abstract should be a complete but concise description of your research proposal, written in such a way that a non-specialist reader will quickly be able to ascertain the purpose of your research project. The SENSS reviewers assessing your application may not be experts in your area of study and need to be able to understand what you will be researching.

*Question:* Are you content for your full research abstract to be made public?

- If you are awarded a studentship, your full research abstract will be made public by the ESRC via UKRI’s Gateway to Research. This is a condition of all studentship awards.
- If you are **not happy for the version you have just provided to be made public** (for example, if you wish to protect your intellectual property), you will be offered the opportunity to provide a second version of your abstract that you are happy to see published.

*Question:* Please provide a detailed research proposal

- **There is a strict limit of 10,000 characters (including spaces between words and punctuation)** for this section. This limit applies to all the text contained in this text box, that is, to your proposal description, research background and questions, research methods, and schedule of work (timeline).
- This limit of 10,000 characters does not include your title, abstract or bibliography, for which different character limits apply. Please note that the application form does not accept footnotes.

- **If you exceed this limit, any additional characters will be disregarded by those assessing your application. This may mean that your application does not score as highly as it might have done.**

***Your proposal should follow this structure:***

- Description of your research proposal (if your proposal uses advanced; quantitative methods (AQM) or Data Skills, please ensure you explain this);
- Research background and questions;
- The research methods you will use;
- Your proposed timeline, including plans for a placement; and,
- Proposed impact.

***Consider covering the following points:***

- The key areas/issues covered by the project, and the research problems or questions you intend to address and why;
  - The research context within which those problems or questions are located;
  - The particular contribution that you hope to make to the existing knowledge and understanding in this area, explaining why your research is important, and noting its relevance to, and potential impact for, non-academic beneficiaries, as appropriate;
  - The methods and critical approaches that you plan to use, and the sources for these, if appropriate;
  - If your project uses advanced quantitative methods (AQM) and/or Data Skills, please explain which methods and datasets it uses, and how it uses them;
  - If relevant, how the proposed research relates to what you have studied already (where there is overlap between your Masters dissertation and your doctoral research, you should demonstrate how the project will go further, and state the added value of continuing to research in this area);
  - How the research project will develop over the period of the award (e.g. key stages, timetable); and,
  - How this research relates to your eventual career aims.
- 
- If you have already begun your doctoral study, indicate the work you have undertaken to date, providing information on main pieces of work completed.

**In writing your proposal, please read the selection criteria (below) by which your application will be judged.**

## COMPETITION SELECTION CRITERIA

Criterion	Definition
Quality and feasibility of proposal (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research question clearly outlined and answerable</li> <li>• Project located within existing literature and research</li> <li>• Research has potential to generate significant new knowledge</li> <li>• Research methods clearly described and appropriate for the task</li> <li>• Timetable plausible and project completable within the time available</li> <li>• Necessary evidence/data either available or collectible</li> </ul>
Interdisciplinary and impact potential of proposal (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit of project within relevant SENSS theme</li> <li>• Some attention given to the potential impact/use of the research beyond academia</li> </ul>
Preparedness and potential of applicant (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to communicate purpose and method, including in personal statement</li> <li>• Basic grounding in substantively relevant discipline</li> <li>• Enthusiasm of supervisor's supporting statement</li> <li>• Evidence of achievement, progression and/or potential in studies to date</li> </ul>
Quality of local research environment, including supervisory expertise (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisory team offers expertise in both substance and methods of proposal</li> <li>• Supervisory team offers combination of experience and training in supervision</li> <li>• Researcher will be connected to wider peer network, within and/or beyond host department, school or university</li> </ul>

*Question:* Please provide a bibliography for your research proposal.

- Please list the key texts to which you have referred in your research proposal. If there are additional important texts you wish to include, please do so.
- There is no character limit for this section, but you should only include texts which are **directly relevant to your proposal**.

*Question:* What ethical considerations are raised by your research project, and how do you plan to address these?

- At a minimum, your proposed research is required to conform both to the ethical standards required by your home institution and to the [ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics](#).
- Your proposed research may also require ethics approval by another institution, for example, the NHS. If this is the case, please explain the approval process,

and how long you estimate it will take to complete. Please also ensure your proposed project timeline takes account of the time needed to obtain this additional approval.

- If you are unsure about whether your research gives rise to any ethical considerations, please discuss this with your proposed primary supervisor.
- If your proposed research does not give rise to any ethical considerations (this will be very rare, and your proposed primary supervisor must agree with this), then simply state this in the text box provided.

*Question:* Have you already identified an organisation you would like to undertake a placement with?

- The ESRC has introduced a new policy which is that all its funded students should undertake a placement of up to three months during their funded award period.
- **A placement involves you going to work with a host organisation for an agreed period on a defined project or research area.** Placements can be flexibly designed to meet the needs of the project, as well as your individual training and development needs.
- Placements are important. They help you to:
  - Establish networks and contacts and develop your cohort-building skills;
  - Gain experience within a professional environment to support your development and broaden your horizons;
  - Disseminate your early research findings, and gain new insights into your own research project, as well as how different research projects are established and managed; and,
  - Learn new skills and enhance your employability prospects through experiencing other workplaces.
- There are two types of placement: those organised by SENSS from our list of existing partners, and those organised by students or supervisors themselves from their own contacts. We anticipate that most students will undertake the first type and you are certainly **not expected to have a placement already agreed at the point of submitting your application.**
- What we ask at the application stage, to help you down the line, is to start thinking about where you might want to do a placement and when would be the best time to do it. You must include this in your research project timeline. Please talk to your supervisor about this.
- To illustrate the types and diversity of potential placements, SENSS has external links with local governments across our region, industrial and commercial organisations like IKEA, opinion polling organisations like YouGov, cultural organisations like the Royal Shakespeare Company. At this stage, think very broadly about the types of organisations that would be interested in the kind of research that you're planning.
- When it comes to organising the placement, your home university and SENSS will support you in doing so.

- Your funding award will include three months paid time to undertake a placement. Given the ESRC's commitment in this area, **you would need SENSS's explicit permission NOT to do a placement, in which case, your funding award will be shortened by 3 months** (e.g. from a +3.5 to a +3.25).

## Resourcing

*Question:* Is your project 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?

- 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.
- 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)

**If you state in your application that you will not need to conduct OFW but change your mind after you start your studies, it is highly unlikely that you will be permitted to apply for funding to support this, unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

So, please think very carefully about whether you will need to conduct OFW for your research and discuss this with your supervisor. 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”, you will be asked additional questions about your fieldwork:
  - 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 main costs you are likely to incur

- You will need to draw up a clear budget for your OFW that itemises all the standard costs you will incur (flights, visa, vaccinations etc.) with a brief justification for any further costs. 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

**If you answer “No” to this question, you will not be permitted to apply for a language training extension if you change your mind once you have started your studentship, unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

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

- If you answer “No”, *you will be asked next whether you have a collaborative element to your studentship.*
- 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)?

- 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 are already proficient in this language, you will not be granted a funding extension.
- You will be expected to start learning this language as soon as possible and will only be granted an extension if you cannot be expected to learn it to the level required before you start your fieldwork.
- 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 issue with your supervisor. 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, further evidence may be required to show 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 to learn or develop a language, as this will not be granted automatically.

### Collaborative studentship information

A student-led research project with a **collaborative element** is one which is devised by the student, who identifies and approaches a non-academic partner (termed a “collaborative partner”) to work with them on their research project. **A collaborative partner is not a university, but can be a business, public or third sector organisation.** There can be more than one collaborative partner.

Collaborative partners must contribute something of value to your research project, for example, contributing financially to help cover studentship costs, providing access to their datasets, providing an additional supervisor, or providing a placement. It is not only important to demonstrate that your research project will benefit from this partner’s knowledge, skills, and resources, but also how this partner will ultimately benefit from the knowledge and outcomes generated by your research project (impact).

- **If you do not have a collaborative partner, please answer “No”. You will be asked next about your prior education – see p.19.**
- If you answer “Yes”, you will be asked additional questions about your collaborative partner.

**Question:** Does your research project, as outlined in your application, include a collaborative element?

- Please provide the following details
  - The name of your collaborating organisation(s);
  - The name, position, and contact details of your contact in this (these) organisation(s);
  - Whether this organisation will provide a placement for you;
  - Whether you are able to provide a letter of support from this organisation; and,
  - Whether you have a second collaborative partner to add to your application.
    - If you answer “No” to having a second partner, *you will be asked next about what contribution your collaborative partner will make to your research project.*
    - If you answer “Yes” to having a second partner, you will be asked for the same information for that partner as for the first partner.
- Please supply a letter of support from your collaborative partner(s) for your research proposal if you are able to do so. A template for a letter of support is available on the HEApply website, in “*Section 2 – Guidance Notes Student Phase application*”, as well as on the SENSS website.
- In brief, the letter should:
  - state why the collaborator(s) would like to partner with you in this research project, and what they hope to gain from the collaboration; and,
  - provide a brief statement about what the collaborator(s) will contribute to your project, including any financial and/or in-kind contributions (such as access to their data), and whether they can provide a placement for you.
- If you are able to provide a letter, you will be asked to upload it in Section 7 – “Upload your documents”.

**Question:** You will be asked to state the nature and value of the contribution your collaborative partner(s) will be providing to your research project via SeNSS.

- Your collaborative partners can either contribute financially (up to 50% of the total value of the studentship), or **in-kind**.
- “In kind” means that your collaborative partner will make a **non-monetary** contribution to your studentship, for example, it may provide an external supervisor for you, allow you to access its datasets or offer you a placement.
  - If your partner is making an in-kind contribution, please estimate the financial value of this contribution.
  - If you are not sure how to do this, please talk to your proposed primary supervisor, or your collaborative partner for an estimate of the value of their contribution.

## 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), and your PhD (only if you have already started studying towards your PhD)

- 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 to determine what skills you have already developed in seven specific 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 aren't 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 aren't 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 word count of 3,500 characters**.

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

- **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've achieved, awards you've won, placements you've undertaken, or conferences you've attended which have either helped prepare you for your research project, or which make you a great candidate for a SENSS studentship.

## SECTION 6: SUPERVISOR DETAILS

*Question:* You will be asked to provide the details of your proposed primary and second supervisor

- **All SENSS-funded students must have two academic supervisors.**

- **You must already have identified your proposed primary supervisor and have been in contact with them to discuss your application.**
- **If you haven't yet identified your proposed primary supervisor, we have produced some advice which may help you find one – click [here](#) to read this advice.**
- **If you are struggling to find a supervisor, please email your [SENSS Operational Lead](#), who will be your initial contact in helping you to identify someone. They will do so by providing you with the name and email address of an academic who you will then need to contact yourself.**
- Your proposed primary supervisor must be based at your chosen SENSS university, and you must consult this supervisor before completing this application form.
  - You should discuss the issue of who your second supervisor should be with your primary supervisor, as they are best placed to know who would add the most value to your research project and your supervisory team.
  - Your second supervisor can also be based at your chosen university but could be based at another SENSS university. However, both supervisors must be based at SENSS universities.
- To provide the details of your supervisory team, first select **“Primary Supervisor (Student Led only)”** in the “Select Type” dropdown menu, and type in the details of your primary supervisor. When you've done that, click on **“Save”**.
- Then, in the “Select Type” dropdown menu, select **“Secondary Supervisor (Student Led only)”**, and type in their details. When you've done that, click on **“Save”**.
- Scroll to the bottom of this webpage, where you will see a blue box in which you should see the details of both your primary and second supervisor.
  - **If the details for both supervisors do not show, please re-enter these in the form above, and ensure you click “Save” when done.**
  - Completing this form triggers an email to be sent to your proposed primary supervisor, asking them to complete a statement in support of your application. Your application for a studentship will not be accepted if your supervisor does not submit a supporting statement.
- Please contact your supervisor to let them know that they will be getting an email requesting a statement. Sometimes these emails may get labelled as spam and placed in their spam/junk folder, so please ask them to check these folders if they don't see this email.

## Declaration

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

## SECTION 7: UPLOAD YOUR DOCUMENTS

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

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.
- **Letter of support, if you have a collaborative element to your studentship:** if you are applying for a studentship with a collaborative element, please scan your letter of support from your collaborative partner and upload this.
- 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.
- You can upload as many documents as you like, but 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.

## SECTION 8: ENSURING YOUR APPLICATION IS COMPLETE

- If you have not completed any questions forming part of your application, exceeded the word or character limits set for any sections, or not uploaded the correct documents, a red box will pop up below the declaration noting this. Please go back and correct this before submitting your application.

## COMPLETING THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORM

- You will also need to complete the Equal Opportunities form if you have not already done so via “Tasks” on your HEapply 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.

**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 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. However, it may be used by those at your home university to decide whether – if you meet certain criteria – to nominate your application to the Thematic Area selection phase of the competition as an additional candidate. As such, if you do meet our widening participation criteria, we would encourage you to provide that information in our EO form. For further information on our widening participation criteria, please click [here](#).**

## SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Reminder: the deadline for submitting your application is **12.00 GMT on Friday 9 February 2024**. Your supervisor’s supporting statement must also be completed and submitted by this deadline.

### Next steps

- There are three review phases in our student-led studentship competition:
  - **First**, your application will first be assessed by your **chosen university** (*this will take place from 9 February to 8 March 2024*). If your application is successful in this round, it will go to the next round of the competition.
  - If your application is unsuccessful, you will be notified via HEIapply, but your chosen university is responsible for sending you any feedback on your application.
  - The **second** round consists of a view of applications by a **panel of Thematic experts** (*this will take place from 17 March to 10 April 2024*). If your application is successful in this round, it will go to the final round of the competition.
  - If your application is unsuccessful, you will be notified via HEIapply and SENSS is responsible for sending you any feedback on your application.
  - The **final** round consists of the **Management Board members** reviewing and approving the final studentship awards (*this will take place from 10 April to 17 April 2023*).
- If your application is short-listed for award at the SENSS Management Board phase, you will be advised via HEIapply by Friday 19 April 2024 whether you have been awarded a studentship.
- As noted, unsuccessful applicants will be provided with a few lines of constructive feedback by SENSS if their application does not progress past the Thematic Area phase of the competition. However, SENSS is not able to provide in-depth feedback due to the number of applications we receive.