

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

TYPES/STRUCTURES OF STUDENTSHIPS

This advice is for applicants, supervisors, and Thematic Area panel members

This document sets out the various structures (i.e. durations) of studentships that SENSS offers to researchers. It begins with the key background, lists the five possible structures, and then emphasises that finding the right one of those options is a joint effort: discussed by applicants and potential supervisors and then assessed by the SENSS Training team.

1. Key background

Previously, the typical structure of a PhD was a three-year degree followed by a completion or 'writing-up' year, known as a +3. Where students did not have the research skills needed for embarking on their project (either because they had not done a Masters degree or because that degree did not provide the requisite training in research methods), they might have been funded to do a Masters degree first. This was known as a 1+3 (or, in the rare cases of a two-year Masters, a 2+2, or a +4 in the case of an integrated Masters and PhD) studentship.

Several things have changed:

- The ESRC no longer requires students to first hold a Masters before they start their PhD, and expects DTP universities to allow students to undertake a PhD without studying for a Masters.
- However, the ESRC does recognise that students may need additional training in order to embark on their PhD project. It will therefore provide:
 - a) for **all researchers**, funding for a 0.25-year bonus on top of the previously standard PhD degree for training and other development needs. This means that the new standard ESRC-funded PhD is of 3.25 years duration;
 - b) for **researchers who require it**, funding for up to three terms – 0.25, 0.5 or 0.75 years – of additional training.
- While the ESRC did not fund the completion year, it did allow for this writing-up period. Now, however, students must submit their theses before or on the date on which their funding award ends.
- In addition, SENSS will offer all researchers (and expect them to take up the offer of) a three-month placement during their PhD. This adds a further funded 0.25 years to researchers' awards.

2. SENSS studentship structures

SENSS will therefore offer **five** studentship structures. The differences simply reflect the amount of research training that is necessary before students embark on their PhD project.

- +3.5 - a standard +3.25 PhD and a one-term placement;
- +3.75 - a standard +3.25 PhD, **one** additional term to gain essential skills or undertake essential training in order to successfully deliver their PhD where they do not require a full Masters, and a one-term placement;
- +4.0 - a standard +3.25 PhD, **two** additional terms to gain essential skills or undertake essential training in order to successfully deliver their PhD where they do not require a full Masters, and a one-term placement;
- +4.25 - a standard +3.25 PhD, **three** additional terms to gain essential skills or undertake essential training in order to successfully deliver their PhD where they do not require a full Masters, and a one-term placement; and,
- +4.5 - a +4.25 award (either a 1+3.25 – a Masters followed by the now standard +3.25 year PhD, a 2+2.25 PhD, or a +4.25 PhD), and a one-term placement.

We envisage that the +3.5 and +4.5 will be the most common studentship structures, for those with and without a Masters respectively. The structures in between could come in useful for those who have either done a good deal of research methods training in undergraduate study, and hence may not need to do a full Masters programme or have done a Masters that involved little research methods training (perhaps because it was in a discipline outside the social sciences).

3. Finding the right structure

As emphasised at the start, this is not something that we leave applicants to do on their own. It is a joint decision that breaks down into three main steps:

- a. We encourage **applicants** to discuss likely structures with their prospective supervisors, exploring their research training experience and where any gaps might be. (However, applicants will not be asked to select a studentship structure when applying, because it is not fair to expect them to know the training territory.)
- b. When submitting their supporting statements to accompany an application, **supervisors** will be asked which structure they think best suits this applicant.
- c. The **SENSS team** will then consider the supervisor's recommendation alongside our own review of the applicant's past experience and training. If the applicant is successful, the studentship offer they will receive will have the structure that SENSS has decided is appropriate.

A final point: **applicants should not worry** about this process! While the various structures can seem complicated, the flip side of this complexity is flexibility. When we refer to gaps in training, these are gaps that we will help applicants to fill, and the various options give us full flexibility to do so. We do not see training gaps as reasons to downgrade an application.

4. Contacts

If you have any queries about how this process works, please email the SENSS Manager (manager@senss-dtp.ac.uk) in the first instance. If applicants or supervisors have specific queries about a certain element of an applicant's training (e.g. whether they have sufficient experience of qualitative methods from a given Masters programme), then the best contact is the SENSS Training Lead (depdirector@senss-dtp.ac.uk).