



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

Supervisor-led Collaborative Studentship Competition 2023 Supervisor Phase: Guidance for Primary Supervisors

Overview

- SENSS will offer between six and eight collaborative studentship awards for an October 2024 start.
- A collaborative studentship award entails a research collaboration between a SENSS supervisory team and a non-Higher Education Institution (non-HEI). A non-HEI can be a business, government, or third sector organization, and must make a financial and/or in-kind contribution to the studentship.
- Collaborative studentships typically offer very strong pathways to research impact and offer students (doctoral researchers – DRs) first-hand experience of a non-academic research environment.
- In this competition, you - as primary supervisor (PS) - develop a research proposal with a collaborative partner and enter it into the SENSS collaborative studentship competition. If you are successful, you will be awarded a collaborative studentship. Next, a competition will be held to award this studentship to the best applicant, who will receive a fully funded award to work with you and your collaborative partner.
- Your collaborative partner must make a financial and/or in-kind contribution to the studentship. **We strongly encourage you to seek a financial contribution (up to a maximum of 50% of the full costs of the studentship), as this may count in your favour in the competition (see section B.2.1. for further details).**
- All research proposals must be based primarily in one of the 6 SENSS interdisciplinary themes. You can only enter this competition if your home HEI is a member of the interdisciplinary theme for which you wish to submit an application (see section A3 for further details).
- **Reflecting SENSS's commitment to interdisciplinarity, projects that can contribute across more than one social science discipline, or that link social sciences with humanities or STEM disciplines, will be scored especially highly.**
- The collaborative supervisory team must consist of at least two academic supervisors and a supervisor from your collaborative partner. You, as the primary supervisor, are responsible for submitting the application for a studentship. **Both you and the second supervisor must meet the eligibility criteria detailed in section B.1. below.**
- Please complete your application using HEApply, SENSS's online application platform. Clicking [here](#) will take you to the SENSS website, where you can click on the "Apply" button to create your HEApply account and/or application.
 - Once you have created your HEApply account and you log in, you will be taken to your dashboard. From there you will need to click on "complete application" button in order to start your application.
- A letter of support from your collaborative partner must be uploaded to this platform (a template for this letter is provided at the end of this document in Appendix 1).
- Studentships should be advertised as being between +3.5 and +4.5-year (1+3.5, 2+2.5, +4.5) awards. The standard length of an ESRC-funded studentship is +3.25, and an additional +0.25 is added to cover the integrated placement which the collaborative partner is expected to offer the DR. All studentships should be offered on either a full-time or part-time basis.

- Residential eligibility: whether they qualify as Home or International, all applicants will be eligible for a fully-funded award. If international, the fee difference between the ESRC tuition rate (£4,712) and the university's rate must be waived. That is, the student will not be required to pay any contribution to tuition fees for the duration of their studentship award.
- Studentships must begin at the start of the 2024/25 academic year (October 2024).

Applications will be reviewed according to set criteria by a specially convened selection panel, which will recommend applications to the SENSS Management Board (MB) for award. The MB will decide the final awards, and you will be advised of the competition outcome by 21 December 2023.

Examples of previous SeNSS collaborative studentships

You can view previous collaborative studentships that were awarded on the [SeNSS website](#). (The SeNSS DTP was the precursor to this DTP.)

Competition timeline

Activity	Date or timeframe
Soft launch of call for supervisor-led collaborative studentship research proposals issued	Monday 7 August 2023
Webinar for supervisors considering applying for a studentship, led by the Deputy Director	12-2pm on Thursday 14 September 2023
HEIapply opens for applications to be submitted	By Friday 3 November 2023
Deadline for proposals to be submitted via HEIapply	12.00pm (noon) GMT on Thursday 30 November 2023
Institutional review phase	
Institutional-level sifting and selection processes	12.00pm (noon) GMT on Monday 30 November 2023
Deadline by which applications nominated by SENSS partner HEIs must reach the SENSS core team via HEIapply	By 12.00pm (noon) GMT on Friday 8 December 2023
Note: <i>Applicants should contact their Academic Lead for local level guidance on how the institutional stage of the competition will be managed at their home HEI. Home HEIs are responsible for conducting supervisor eligibility checks.</i>	
Peer review phase	
SENSS core team makes applications available to the MB sub-committee via HEIapply	Friday 8 December 2023
Selection panel members undertake their evaluations on HEIapply	Start: Friday 8 December 2023. Deadline for completion: 9.00am GMT on Friday 15 December 2023
SENSS core team compiles the evaluations, and circulates a document containing all evaluations to the selection panel	After 9.00am GMT on Friday 15 December 2023
Selection panel meets to agree the single ranked list of applications	Tuesday 19 December 2023
Note: <i>The applications will be assessed based on the selection criteria outlined below.</i>	
Management Board review and award phase	
SENSS core team provides the single ranked list, including the final scores, and the meeting report to the Academic Leads via email	Tuesday 19 December 2023

Academic Leads confirm, via email, that they are content with the selection panel's recommendations for award	By 12.00pm (noon) GMT on Thursday 21 December 2023
Outcomes circulated	Thursday 21 December 2023
Successful applicants to provide wording for studentship adverts	No later than Thursday 4 January 2024
Advertisement of eight top-ranked research proposals, calling for candidates to apply for the attached collaborative studentships	No later than Tuesday 9 January 2024
Feedback provided to unsuccessful applicants	By Wednesday 17 January 2024

If you have any queries, please consult the detailed guidance, which follows below, or contact your HEI's SENSS administrative lead:

City, University London: researchsupport@city.ac.uk

Cranfield University: michelle.starkey@cranfield.ac.uk

Goldsmiths, University of London: graduateschool@kent.ac.uk

Roehampton University: SeNSS@roehampton.ac.uk

University of East Anglia: senss.dtp@uea.ac.uk

University of Essex: pgresearch@essex.ac.uk

University of Lincoln: lblackwell@lincoln.ac.uk

University of Middlesex: researchdegrees@mdx.ac.uk

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A. DETAILED GUIDANCE

1. Introduction

This document is intended to guide you, as the primary supervisor, through the process of making an application to SENSS for studentship for your collaborative research project.

SENSS offers two types of studentships:

- Student-led studentships: for these awards, student applicants come up with, and develop, their own research questions. This may involve working with a non-Higher Education (non-HEI) collaborative partner which that student has identified themselves; and,
- Supervisor-led collaborative studentships: supervisors develop a research question and proposal in conjunction with a non-HEI partner. If awarded a studentship, the supervisor, the student, and the collaborative partner work together on the research project.

This guidance relates to the competition for the second type of studentship: the supervisor-led collaborative studentship.

SENSS has **ring-fenced several of its studentships** for its annual supervisor-led collaborative studentship competition. All studentships are fully-funded and should be offered as between +3.5 to +4.5 year (1+3.5, 2+2.5, +4.5) awards. The standard length of an ESRC-funded studentship is +3.25, and an additional +0.25 is added to cover the integrated placement which the collaborative partner is expected to offer the DR. These studentships must begin at the start of the 2024/25 academic year.

2. What is a supervisor-led collaborative research project & who are non-HEI for these purposes?

Supervisor-led collaborative research projects are those which involve a partnership with a non-HEI, which can be a business, government, or third sector organisation (these are all termed “collaborative partners” in this *Guidance*). These partners can be based in the UK, or overseas. For the purposes of this competition, supervisors develop a research question and proposal in conjunction with a collaborative partner.

Collaborative partners must contribute something of value to the research project. There are a wide range of things a collaborative partner can contribute, from a financial contribution to a contribution in-kind:

- A financial contribution could consist of paying up to 50% of the full studentship costs (50% amounts to ~£14k p.a.), and/or travel costs for the student and supervisor etc.
- A contribution in-kind could consist of one or more of the following things: a co-supervisor for the studentship attached to the project; access to the collaborative partner's data; use of the collaborative partner's equipment, and/or office space etc.

3. Research proposals must be based primarily in one of SENSS interdisciplinary themes.

All projects must be based primarily in one of the six SENSS interdisciplinary themes. If you wish to submit an application for a particular theme, you must first confirm that your home HEI is a member of that Theme:

		City	Cranfield	Essex	Goldsmiths	Lincoln	Middlesex	Roehampton	UEA
1	Sustainability & Climate Emergency	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	Health, Well-Being & Social Care	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Justice, Institutions & Social Change	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	Resolving Uncertainty & Addressing Crises	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5	Digital Social Sciences	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
6	Advanced Methods for Social & Economic Research	X		X	X		X	X	X

Students and supervisors involved with supervisor-led collaborative studentships must adhere to the requirements set down in the SENSS progress and training procedures, e.g. attending SENSS training events, and participating in cohort-building activities.

Prior to submission to SENSS, proposals will be reviewed by your home HEI to ensure that only appropriate proposals of the highest quality are submitted to the DTP. Once a proposal has been received by SENSS, there will be no further opportunities to improve it. It is the additional responsibility of your home HEI to ensure that you and the second supervisor are eligible, according to the rules outlined in section B.1 below.

4. The criteria by which your application for a collaborative studentship will be assessed

The criteria by which applications will be assessed are set out in the table below. These criteria are subject to the formal agreement of the SENSS Strategy Board, which meets 10 November 2023. If any changes made by that Board, the revised criteria will be circulated as soon as possible after that meeting, but it is not expected that there will be any major changes.

Collaborative (Supervisor phase)	Definition
Quality and feasibility of proposal (40%)	Purpose and question clearly outlined Project located within and advances on previous research and current state of the art Research has potential to generate significant new knowledge Research methods, potential risks, and timeline clearly described and appropriate for the task
Interdisciplinary and impact potential of the proposal (10%)	Fit of project within relevant SENSS theme Clear articulation of how the disciplinary perspective is enhanced by other disciplinary approaches Detailed attention given to the likely impact of the research within and beyond academia
Suitability and feasibility of wider project for a studentship (15%)	Clear outlining of role of researcher and project within collaboration Research question(s) discrete and answerable Project completable within the time available Necessary evidence/data either available or collectible
Quality of the	Strong links between applicant and partner organisation

collaboration and local research environment, including supervisory expertise (25%)	Evidence of past (or, in cases of new collaborations, potential) collaborative outputs and/or policy impact Opportunities for researcher to build network with practitioners, within and/or beyond collaborative partner
Quality and relevance of training and integrated placement (10%)	Collaboration enables Research in Practice training Placement makes clear contribution to specific or wider project Placement will enable the researcher to develop transferable skills

5. The application process

Applications should be completed using HEIapply, SENSS's online application platform, which will open for applications by Friday 3 November 2023. A letter of support from your collaborative partner must be uploaded to this platform (a template for this letter is provided at the end of this document in Appendix 2). However, the information contained in this document will provide you with all the information you will need to begin drafting your application, so you can work on it before the platform opens.

The deadline for submitting the application form via HEIapply is **12.00 GMT on Thursday 30 November 2023**.

B. GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

The following sections set out the information required in the application form itself.

1. Supervisory team's details

Please note that, as a supervisor, you may submit as many proposals per year as you choose in which you are named as the primary supervisor. However, you can only be awarded one collaborative studentship per year in which you are named as the primary supervisor. As the primary supervisor, you are responsible for submitting the research proposal. There is no limit to the number of projects in which you are named as a co-supervisor.

All research proposals must name two supervisors: the primary supervisor, who leads on the research project, and who has overall responsibility for supervising the doctoral researcher attached to the project; and a second supervisor, who is not necessarily involved in the research project on a day-to-day basis, but who is familiar with it and brings their expertise to bear on the topic, as well as attending the supervisory progress meetings for the doctoral researcher. The supervisory team should also include a representative or co-supervisor from the collaborative partner.

1.1 Supervisor details and eligibility

To be eligible, you must:

- Be a research-active member of staff. This is defined as:
 - Someone who was successfully submitted by their HEI for REF 2021; and,
 - Whose research proposal comes under a SENSS interdisciplinary theme for which their HEI submitted a qualifying unit of assessment in the SENSS DTP bid.
 - If you are an **early career researcher** and were, therefore, not submitted for consideration in REF 2021, you can still act as the primary supervisor where the second supervisor is someone who qualifies under the two points above and is an experienced supervisor.
- Either have undertaken approved professional development training in relation to your supervisory role within the last three years (this requirement must be satisfied by the time of registration of the student concerned), or must undertake this training within three months of your doctoral researcher starting their studies); and,

- Have an excellent record of formal progress reporting in the previous 12 months for all doctoral researchers (or, if you are an early career researcher and have not supervised any/many doctoral researchers, the second supervisor must fulfil this criterion).

Responsibility for checking supervisor eligibility lies with the supervisor's home HEI, which must confirm that it has done so to SENSS.

Primary supervisor's details

Please provide your title, name, email address, job title, and the name of your university. You will also be required to confirm that you meet the **supervisor eligibility criteria**, set out above.

Second supervisor's details

The second supervisor can either be based at the same university as you, or a different university. You will need to provide the same details for the second supervisor as you provided for yourself. As the applicant, you will also be required to confirm that the second supervisor meets the supervisor eligibility criteria outlined above.

2. Collaboration details

The following information must be provided:

- Your collaborative partner's name;
- Your collaborative partner's address;
- The name of your contact who will act as the representative of your collaborative partner;
- Your contact's email address;
- Your contact's job title;
- Whether this contact will form part of the supervisory team (and, if not, who will);
- If this contact will not form part of the supervisory team, the details of the person who will take on that role.

Please note that you can include more than one collaborative partner in your project. If you have a second partner you'd like to include, please provide the same information for this partner as for the first partner you included.

2.1 Contribution to be made by collaborative partner

Please provide details of the contribution – financial and/or in-kind - that your collaborative partner will make to this project. You can select more than one option.

We would strongly encourage you to seek a financial contribution to the project from your partner (up to a maximum of 50% of the full costs of the studentship), noting that this may be taken into consideration during the selection process. That is, where projects are deemed to be of equal quality, where the collaborative partner for one of the projects is offering a financial contribution to the project, that proposal may be ranked higher than the other proposals.

Studentship costs (based on the cost of a +3 PhD for the 2023/24 academic year) are as follows:

- Fees: £4,712 per academic year
- Stipend: £18,622 per academic year, or £20,622 including London weighting for those HEIs based in London (City, Goldsmiths, and Roehampton)
- Research Training Support Grant: £950 per academic year
- Overseas Fieldwork contribution: £450 per academic year
- Student Cohort Development Fund contribution: £4,000 one-off payment which covers training across the life of the award
- Approximate total costs per academic year @ 50% of the full costs: £14k (or £15k, including London weighting)

2.2 Description of the collaboration

Please describe the collaboration, noting that there is a limit of 10,000 characters for this description. Please consider and refer to the grading criteria when completing this section.

2.3 Letter of support from your collaborative partner

Please provide a letter of support from your collaborative partner as part of your application. A template of this letter, and a list of the issues and points it must address, is contained in Appendix 1 to this *Guidance*. **Please ensure this letter is limited to two A4 pages.** (At the end of the application form, there is an “upload your documents section” on HEIapply – please upload your letter of support there.)

3. Research project proposal details

3.1 Research project title

Please provide the full title for your project.

3.2 Research project pathway

Your research project proposal must sit primarily within one of the SENSS interdisciplinary themes, which are listed in section A.3., above. In addition, your home HEI must be a member of the Theme for which you wish to enter an application.

3.3 Research project description

Please describe your research project. **Please note that there is a strict limit for this description of 30,000 characters.** In describing your research proposal, please address the following:

- The nature and significance of the proposed research, including expected outcomes and impact, and the work that would be undertaken by the doctoral researcher;
- Any research activity which is planned (overseas fieldwork, workshops, conference costs etc.);
- A description of the integrated placement that the collaborative partner will provide for the student (duration: up to 3 months); and,
- Any project-specific training the student would need to undertake in order to successfully complete this research (including any language training).

4. Recruiting to the studentship

4.1 Full-time and part-time studentships

All studentships should be available on either a full- or part-time basis. If this studentship cannot be made available on a part-time basis, please explain why not.

4.2 Structure of studentships

Studentships must be offered as a +3.5-year opportunity as a minimum. This includes the standard +3 PhD, plus an additional term for a placement, and a further additional term to enable the student to undertake training relevant to their research project (including career progression). The maximum length of a studentship is +4.5 years: this is based on a 4-year PhD (1+3; 2+2, or +4) and also includes additional term for a placement, and a further additional term to enable the student to undertake training relevant to their research project. Studentships may also be awarded on a +3.75, a +4 or a +4.25 basis: this includes a +3 PhD, an additional term for a placement, and a further 2, 3, or 4 additional terms to enable the student to undertake training relevant to their research project.

5. Upload your documents

You will need to upload a letter of support from your collaborative partner, for which guidance and a template follow below:

6. Advertising and marketing the studentship

You are not required to provide this information as part of your application. However, should you be successful in being awarded a studentship, you will be asked to provide this

information at that point. This will likely need to be done in late December 2023/early January 2024.

If you are awarded a studentship, you will be required to:

- Draft an advert; and,
- Create a marketing plan.

Guidance for drafting an advert

As this advert is key to attracting high-quality applicants, we recommend that you refer to the guidance provided in Appendix 2 to this document.

SENSS will draft some standard text which will be appended to the end of your advert. This text will include the following information:

- What SENSS is;
- That this studentship is being funded by the ESRC, through the SENSS DTP;
- What the eligibility criteria are for this studentship; and,
- What funding the student will receive.

Substance

- Your advert should include a clear **description of the research background**, the **project's aims and objectives**, and **information on the role the doctoral researcher will play in this project**.
- It should also include any **specific training opportunities** for the student.
- Where relevant, please include hyperlinks to other websites offering further information related to the project (e.g. information on the collaborative partner).

Examples of how this information was used by the SeNSS DTP (the precursor to this DTP):

- [Studentship advert on SeNSS's website](#)
- [Advert on FindaPhD](#)

Studentship marketing plan

To compliment the SENSS marketing activities planned to promote the studentship, please create a marketing plan in which you identify the additional steps you and your collaborative partner will take to promote the studentship. We recommend that you refer to the guidance provided in Appendix 2 to this document.

We would expect to see the following in your marketing plan:

- How you will promote the studentship to undergraduate and Masters students internally; and,
- How you and your collaborative partner will promote the studentship externally, for example online, on social media, or leveraging through your networks.

What SENSS will do:

Using details from your marketing plan and your draft advertisement, SENSS will create adverts which will be placed on the SENSS website, as well as original content for SENSS social media platforms for promoting the studentship competition. SENSS will also use online advertising through jobs.ac.uk and findaphd.com and will use the details provided in your advert to create these. To do this, as a minimum, you will need to provide SENSS with:

- Authorised use of your collaborative partners logo, which you will need to supply; and,
- Social media handles for your supervisory team and collaborative partner.

Appendix 1: Template for your collaborative partner's letter of support

Please note: the letter of support must be provided on the collaborative partner's official letterhead.

[Collaborative partner's address]

[Date]

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR SENSS SUPERVISOR-LED COLLABORATIVE STUDENTSHIP RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This letter should include the following information:

The title of the research project, and the name of the primary supervisor (with whom the collaborative partner has been working on developing this proposal).

Rationale

Why the collaborative partner wishes to be a partner in this project.

Input

- What the collaborative partner will contribute to this project, including any financial and/or in-kind contributions (which can include staff time, access to equipment in their organisation, provision of data, software or materials - expressed as cash equivalent);
 - In particular, this letter should confirm that the collaborative partner will provide a 3-month placement for the student.
- In particular, please include and highlight details of contributions which are essential to the successful conduct of the research (e.g. confirming access to datasets, or confirming access to or use of facilities provided by the collaborative partner).
- Whether a representative from the collaborative partner will act as a co-supervisor for the studentship.

Output

- Details regarding the collaborative partner's involvement in, and commitment to, research and/or doctoral research, or why the collaborative partner wishes to develop its role in research and/or doctoral research (e.g. to build capacity, or product or service development etc.).
- Please note that collaborative partners are not required to have past involvement in doctoral or academic research, but may wish to be a partner in order to develop future collaborations.
- The collaborative partner's assessment of the likely or potential impacts of the research project.

Any other comments the collaborative partner wishes to make in support of this project.

[Signature: representative of collaborative partner]

Name of representative:

Representative's job title:

Name of collaborative partner:

Appendix 2: Guidance for writing a studentship advert and marketing plan.

Studentship Advert:

Write for your audience

When writing your advertisement, it's best to assume that your audience is final year undergraduates. As a result, we recommend that you avoid using jargon or overly expert or technical language.

Give concrete details

Include information such as:

- Who is the collaborative partner, and what do they bring to the table for this project?
- What is the problem to be solved, and what are the objectives of the project/studentship?
- Why is this research important, and why now?
- What will the doctoral researcher actually do?
- What training opportunities might the doctoral researcher have?
- What are the (complementary) strengths of the members of the supervisory team?

Take a look at existing examples of adverts on advertising websites

Website such as FindaPhD, and jobs.ac.uk are particularly helpful for this.

Keep it concise and specific

People tend to scan web content in a rough 'F' shape, where the left-hand side of the page is used, so sub-headings, short paragraphs, and bullet points are great for this.

Put all the key information in a sentence at the beginning of each section so you don't lose your reader's attention.

Be enthusiastic!

If you think your project is exciting and innovative, say so in your advert.

As your project involves collaboration, be sure to point on how valuable this is, and consider using links to the collaborative partner's website or research.

Be encouraging to increase applicant interest

You can encourage applications from candidates from other disciplines by reassuring them about any training or upskilling that will be provided for them.

Try to allow for candidates from a wide range of degree subjects.

Marketing Plan:

Plan for your audience

Consider the key attributes and experience you and your collaborative partner will be looking for, and target your platforms.

Give concrete details

Consider including details such as:

- Where you will be advertising;
- When you will be advertising; and,
- Who will be responsible for posts.

Create original content

Use different content for different platforms, and plan staggered messages to engage different audiences.