

Arts and Humanities Research Council



AHRC DOCTORAL LANDSCAPE AWARD (DLA) STUDENTSHIP COMPETITION

Guidance Notes

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Introduction

This document provides guidance to members of academic staff, prospective supervisors, professional services colleagues, and applicants on the selection process and administrative arrangements for the AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award (DLA) Studentship Competition for awards commencing in October 2027.

The aim of the document is to make the competition processes clear to all.

Applicants are also asked to read the following documents for detailed guidance on their obligations as a potential studentship award-holder, and on the university's obligations as a UKRI AHRC grant holder:

UKRI Terms and conditions for Training Funding:
AHRC Studentships: Additional Requirements for Research Organisations and Award-holders:
https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/meeting-ukri-terms-and-conditions-for-funding/

Definitions

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council: the external funder of the DLA studentships.
Award-holder	An applicant who has successfully secured an award in the studentship competition.
DLA	Doctoral Landscape Awards: the name of these studentship awards, separate to previous AHRC awards such as those, for example, awarded through Doctoral Training Partnerships.
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
WP	Widening Participation

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Widening Participation (WP)

We are an inclusive community in which everybody – staff and students alike – are treated with dignity and respect. This is part of our vision of how research excellence comes about. We value individual differences and the diversity that this brings, and we are keen to ensure that no one is at a disadvantage, whether at the application stage or as part of our cohort, because of who they are.

We welcome all applicants irrespective of their gender, socio-economic background or ethnicity. We seek to include diverse life experiences and recognise the value of this diversity in developing excellent research. We explicitly encourage review panels to recognise this in their assessment of an applicant's preparedness for doctoral study.

We are committed to WP through positive action and support. We are particularly keen to encourage applications from under-represented groups, including (though not limited to) people with disabilities, members of ethnic minorities, applicants from lower income families and mature students.

In keeping with our commitment to WP, awards can be either full-time or part-time.

Final stage nominees are asked to complete an **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form**. This will be separated from the Nomination pack before it is circulated for review.

We are required to submit anonymised statistics to the AHRC on EDI characteristics for all nominees and those who are successful. The DLA administrator will be able to identify who the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form belongs to, solely for the purposes of being able to make this distinction. All information reported to the AHRC and to the Faculty Review Panel is anonymised.

School and Faculty Review Panels should be aware of, and sympathetic to the fact that applicants will come from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those with experience in practice or industry. Panels are asked to bear in mind that while formal academic qualifications are important indicators of academic achievement and potential, comparable consideration should be made to nominees with less conventional academic profiles, for example, mature nominees with significant and distinguished careers in creative arts or other professional practices. non-conventional trajectories, e.g., where relevant experience is deemed to compensate for a lower degree classification.

Research proposals are welcome from recent graduates (or from those about to graduate) or from those who have not attended a university for some time. In any of these cases, applicants may point to relevant professional or practitioner experience to substantiate their case for funding.

We are committed to widening participation in our DTP (and beyond) through positive action and support. We welcome applicants of all ages and from all backgrounds. We are particularly keen to encourage applications from under- represented groups, including (though not limited to) people with disabilities, members of ethnic minorities, lower income families and mature students.

In keeping with our commitment to widening participation, awards can be either full-time or part-time.

Overview: Eligibility and Financial Support Available

Number of Awards Available

- We will make **five** standard DLA studentships for entry in the 2027/2028 academic year.
- **Three** studentships are available across all AHRC subjects; **two** are available within the thematic areas of 'Creative Places' and 'Policy in Place'.
- As stipulated by the AHRC, no more than 30% of the total number of awards available can be allocated to international candidates. We would **suggest** that schools submit a maximum of two international nominations (out of their allotted five nominations) to the final stage of the competition.

Duration of an Award

- The normal duration of an award is **42 months full-time** (3.5 years) or **84 months part-time** (7 years) in the first instance.
- A part-time award must not be less than 50% of the full-time equivalent.

Who is Eligible to be Considered for an Award

- UK and international applicants **commencing their doctoral studies** from October 2027; and
- who meet the entry requirements of their preferred PhD programme; and
- have a research proposal falling within the **AHRC's subject domain:** https://www.ukri.org/councils/ahrc/remit-programmes-and-priorities/; and
- who have secured the support of a **school supervisory team** with expertise in their subject area.

Applicants with a research proposal in mind must identify a potential supervisor(s) and approach this supervisor with a view to developing their proposal **as early in the process as possible**.

Applicants who have not secured supervision by the postgraduate application deadline on **Friday 15 January 2027** will not be considered for the competition.

The Value of the Award

- **Tuition fees** paid at a rate equivalent to the **home** UK fee.
- A minimum **stipend** per year for living costs, which is paid in advance in monthly instalments.

Stipend rates are currently published here:
https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/support-for-ukri-funded-students/

- Award-holders are eligible to apply to a fund reserved for supporting primary research costs and development opportunities including, for example, conference attendance, fieldwork, language training, overseas research visits and placements with a non-HE organisation.

- Award-holders **do not have a personal research account** to drawn from.

- We **cannot** fund the (monetary) difference between home and international tuition fees. Successful international applicants may need to be prepared to fund the difference between the home and international tuition fee rate by alternative means.

Employment

- It is a condition of an award that at the time of commencement (1 October 2027) the applicant is **not in full-time employment**. Applicants in full-time employment are not eligible for an award.

- An applicant in part-time employment may be eligible for a part-time award providing the hours of employment plus the hours of part-time study do not normally exceed the equivalent of 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE).

Study Location

- Award-holders are required to be resident in the UK for most of their studies.

- Award-holders must live within a reasonable travel time of Newcastle University to ensure that they are able to maintain regular contact with their department and their supervisors. This is to ensure that the award-holder is not isolated and receives the full support, mentoring, training and access to facilities required to complete their research successfully and to a high standard.

- The only exceptions to these requirements are to cover periods of absence that are an essential part of your study, for example, fieldwork, study visits, conference attendance, a temporary reasonable adjustment for a disabled student.

  (https://www.ukri.org/publications/terms-and-conditions-for-training-funding/ukri-training-grant-guidance/ - Place of Tenure)

The Studentship Competition Timeline

October 2026	Competition opens.
	Advertised externally at: https://www.ncl.ac.uk/hass/study/postgraduate/pgr/ahrc-doctoral-landscape-awards/
	Advertised externally on the postgraduate funding database.
	Schools and prospective supervisors advertise via their own networks.
	Prospective applicants identify and approach potential supervisors with details of their research proposal as soon as possible.
STAGE ONE:	
16:00 Friday 15 January 2027	Deadline for applicants to submit the standard Newcastle University PhD application form via the portal: https://applyto.newcastle.ac.uk/ quoting **AHRC27**. Applicants must also upload: • A completed **Competency-based Assessment Form** when asked for a Personal Statement. • The **title** of their **research proposal**. • A copy of their **CV**. • Copies of their **previous qualifications**. • Evidence of **English Language** qualification results (if relevant).
	Deadline for applicants to submit a completed copy of their AHRC DLA Nomination Form to their school postgraduate PS colleague.
	Applicants who have not approached and secured supervisory support by this date **cannot** be considered for the competition.
	Schools form internal academic panels for the assessment of Stage One application 'packs,' (Nomination Form, Competency-based Assessment Form, and Postgraduate Application).
	Schools will be provided with a Marking Scheme and Assessment Criteria, and a School Review template to record their scores and comments.
16:00 Friday 5 February 2027	Deadline for schools to submit their School Review spreadsheets to landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk for information.
	Schools inform their top five ranked applicants that they have been selected to go forward to the second stage of the competition.
	Schools inform any unsuccessful applicants that they will not proceed to the second stage.
	Schools/supervisors work with their five successful nominees to revise and improve their Nomination Form based on feedback from the Internal Review. The Competency-based Assessment Form must not be changed.

STAGE TWO:	
16:00 Tuesday 23 February 2027	Deadline for schools to submit their final five Nomination packs to landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk, to include: • The **Nomination Form**. • A **Maximum** of **Two** References. • **Undergraduate and Postgraduate Transcripts** (not Degree Certificates), or evidence of provisional marks / marks received to date. • **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** • **Competency-based Assessment Form** Ideally, the full nomination should be submitted as one complete PDF.
Wednesday 24 February 2027	Nominations are passed to the Faculty Review Panel, which will include the Faculty AHRC PGR Lead, Dean of PGR Studies, and selected colleagues not directly involved in Stage 1 of the competition.
	Each nomination is scored independently by three members of the panel, according to the Marking Scheme and Assessment Criteria.
Tuesday 7 March 2027	Deadline for the Faculty Review Panel members to submit their individual scores and comments to landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk
Wednesday 10 March 2027	Average scores calculated and a ranked order of all nominees established and shared with the Faculty Review Panel members.
Wednesday 17 March 2027	Provisional meeting date of the Faculty Review Panel to discuss and ratify the competition outcomes.
w/c 22 March 2027 (before Easter Break)	Outcomes issues to all nominees, supervisors, and school postgraduate PS colleagues from landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk

Completing the Nomination Form

General

- It is important that you write in clear, precise English, and that you express your ideas in a way that is accessible to non-specialists. Members of a Review Panel are experts, but not necessarily in your specific sub-field(s). It is advisable to avoid or to explain discipline-specific jargon orterminology.

- Applicants who submit **incomplete** Nomination Forms by **Friday 15 January 2027**, e.g. having completed Section 1, but not Section 2, will not be considered for an award.

- The Nomination Form is available online at: https://www.ncl.ac.uk/hass/study/postgraduate/pgr/ahrc-doctoral-landscape-awards/

Section 1: Personal Details

- Please provide full and accurate information. Your eligibility for a particular level of funding (home or international) is based on the details provided at the time of your nomination.

- To self-assess eligibility for a particular level of funding (home or international), you can consult Annex B of the UKRI Training Grant Guidance: "International Eligibility criteria for UKRI funded studentships" at https://www.ukri.org/publications/terms-and-conditions-for-training-funding/.

Section 2: Subject Area Details

- You must select one **Primary AHRC Subject Area** from the drop-down list, which correspond to the AHRC's subject area remit. **Do not** overwrite the existing list or add a new subject area.

- If the proposed project is **interdisciplinary** in nature, you must still select **only one** Primary AHRC Subject Area from the drop-down list. There is space on the form to explain why the proposal should be classed as interdisciplinary, what further subject area(s) is(are) are involved, and how the proposed methodology is genuinely interdisciplinary.

Section 3: Higher Education to Date

- You are reminded that for taught postgraduate and undergraduate awards you must provide a full **transcript**, translated into English where necessary.

- If you are currently completing a taught postgraduate programme, you must provide a provisional transcript listing your modules and marks received to-date.

- If you hold more than one undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree, please list the most relevant to the nomination and the subject of your research proposal.

Section 4: Relevant Professional Employment Experience / Relevant Publications, Exhibitions, Commissions, etc.

- Examples include relevant professional practice, paid employment, volunteering, placements, internships, exhibitions, shows, work in galleries, awards, commissions, residencies, publications, and conference papers. These should be relevant to your research proposal and not otherwise mentioned on the Nomination Form.

- Review Panels will assess nominations with due regard to non-conventional trajectories, e.g., where relevant experience is deemed to be equivalent to the appropriate degree classification.

Section 5: Research Proposal and Case for Support

- You should write the 100-word Proposal Summary so it is accessible to a reader who may not be a subject specialist. This short summary is required by the AHRC for successful nominees.

- To be eligible for funding, all research proposals **must explicitly address each of** the following:

    1. It must define a series of **research questions**, issues or problems that will be addressed during the research. It must also define its aims and objectives in terms of seeking to enhance knowledge and understanding relating to the questions, issues or problems to be addressed.

    2. It must specify a **research context** for the questions, issues or problems to be addressed. You must specify why it is important that these questions, issues or problems should be addressed; what other research is being or has been conducted in this area; and what contribution this project will make to the advancement of creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding in this area.

    3. It must specify the **research methods** for addressing and answering the research questions, issues or problems. You must state how, during the research project, you will seek to answer the questions, address the issues or solve the problems. You should also explain the rationale for your chosen research methods and why you think they provide the most appropriate means by which to address the research questions, issues or problems.

The proposal (research questions, context, and methods) is **strictly limited to 1000 words**, including footnotes – which we suggest you do not use. Do **not** include a bibliography. Reference should be brief, e.g. '*Smith, 2009'* is sufficient as the proposal will be considered by experts familiar with the literature.

It should be clear that the project is **feasible** within the funded period of the studentship. You should highlight any potential difficulties that might arise and explain how they will be met. You should highlight the resources and facilities that will be required, any anticipated fieldwork, special training (e.g., immersive language training) or specialist equipment requirements that will be necessary for the successful completion of the PhD.

Consult your prospective supervisors about the availability of key resources and the likely costs of research and training activities to ensure the viability of your proposed project and provide an estimate of costs where possible.

Award-holders can bid for additional funding (RTSG) to support their research costs as they progress through their PhD. But such funding is **not guaranteed** and **award-holders do not have a personal allowance to draw on**. Significant costs stated as vital to the research may influence the assessors' view of the feasibility of the project. Any high-cost RTSG applications are checked against this section of the Nomination Form. A failure to mention high-cost requirements at this stage will mean the funding application is likely to be rejected.

- There is **no guarantee** that we will be able to fund all costs associated with the project**. The issuing of an award should not be taken to imply that all costs will be met**.

Section 8: Supervision

- The composition of the proposed supervisory team must comply with Newcastle University's *Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students*, with a **main and second supervisor at Newcastle University.** Additional supervisors may be appointed from another university or non-HE organisation, if appropriate to the research proposal, and in line with the university's policy on *External Advisors and Development of Joint Supervision Arrangements (Principles).*

  There is no financial remuneration for external supervisors and advisors via the studentship. A financial arrangement, if any, will be at discretion of your school, and cannot by any means be funded by the AHRC DLA.

  When filling in this section, please include:

  - The supervisory team's expertise in relation to the proposed project.
  - Details of the track record of postgraduate (PhD) student supervision across the supervisory team.
  - Relevant publications.
  - Any involvement in postgraduate training.
  - Relevant web-links to staff profiles and publications.
  - Where appropriate, arrangements for mentoring and support for Early Career supervisors or supervisors with less experience of PhD supervision.

Section 9: Training and Development

- Supervisors must confirm that any supplementary costs involved in undertaking fundamental research or in meeting your training needs are realistic and justified and explain how these costs will be met in full, if not by the AHRC DLA.

  No funding (additional to fees and stipend) is guaranteed and award-holders **do not have a personal allowance** to draw on for primary research costs. Significant costs stated as vital to the research may influence the assessors' view of the feasibility of the project.

Section 10: Research Environment

- This section should highlight how you will be integrated into the research environment in your subject area. Include details of how the research strengths of the subject in the school, interdisciplinary research groups, clusters, Centres, and Institutes, specialised facilities/resources, and external partnerships, are relevant to or will contribute to the completion of your research project.

Information for Interdisciplinary Applicants

We understand interdisciplinary research as being the integration of **distinct** methodological approaches from two or more **distinct** subject areas, generating outcomes that could not be achieved from within a single subject area.

We welcome applications for interdisciplinary research projects. These may be of two kinds:

(i) Applicants engage with **two or more arts and humanities disciplines (or subject areas)**. In this case, applicants must make it clear how their project will integrate approaches from the two subject areas (e.g., film and philosophy) they have identified.

(ii) Applicants engage **both with arts and humanities disciplines and with a STEM or social sciences discipline**. Applicants must still make it clear that their project falls predominantly within the arts and humanities. Nominees should identify the project as interdisciplinary. In particular, they should identify the non-AHRC subject area and provide an explanation for its rationale on the Nomination Form.

For Instance:

Under (i) above, a project that uses linguistic analysis of language attitudes to explore and develop the design of language-learning apps for refugees would be interdisciplinary. It integrates methodologies from two arts and humanities subject areas (Linguistics and Interaction Design) and generates outcomes that *could not* be achieved within a single discipline or subject area.

Under (ii) above, a project that makes significant use of research methods associated with economics as part of a broader study of popular music would be interdisciplinary. It integrates methodologies from an arts and humanities discipline (music) and a social sciences discipline (economics).

However, projects where the researcher reviews economic literature on popular music, but does not use methods of economic analysis as part of their original contribution, would not meet this definition. A project that explores Ghanaian literary culture of the 1990s, and in doing so draws on historical political material such as newspapers, is not interdisciplinary for the purposes of our assessment. The *data* are often considered by different subjects, but the *methods* belong to a single discipline. The project outcomes *could* be achieved within a single subject area.

Information for Creative Practice Applicants

We actively seek to support Creative Practice-led research. Applicants nominated in Creative Practice-based areas only are required to supply a URL in (**Section 6: Sample of Practice-based Outputs**) to a portfolio of outputs which provides the assessors with contextual information and articulates the methodological aspect of creative practice. The portfolio is not an extra quality check but rather allows applicants to demonstrate how their creative work represents an appropriate methodology for addressing their research questions and their preparedness for doctoral study.

It is vital that applicants make clear the methodological value of creative practice within the application.

Information for Thematic Applicants

Creative Places

Studentships in this theme are expected to focus on creative practice-based research, investigating the role of culture and creativity to enrich lives and empower voices.

Policy in Place

Studentships in this theme are expected to focus on translating place-based research within the arts and humanities into policy contexts.

Referees and References

References are **required** for the final five nominations selected for each school only.

Schools who require sight of references from applicants they are considering at Stage 1 of the competition must ensure their candidates are aware of where references should be sent, and by when, as early in the competition process as possible.

- Referees should complete the proforma Reference Form, which can be downloaded at: https://www.ncl.ac.uk/hass/study/postgraduate/pgr/ahrc-doctoral-landscape-awards/

  This proforma has been designed with EDI in mind, to ensure parity and avoid disadvantage to nominees. It guides referees to provide information of specific interest to the competition assessors.

- **Nominees are responsible** for contacting their referees at the earliest opportunity and for advising where references should be sent and by when. Nominees should identify the member of Professional Services Staff or member of staff who has responsibility for the administration of the competition within their school, and to make themselves aware of the deadline for the receipt of references.

- Referees should be directed to send their references to the member(s) of staff identified above. References should **not** be sent to the nominee to then forward on and should **not** be sent directly to landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk.

- **Schools can set their own deadline** for the receipt of references, which can be in advance of Tuesday 23 February 2027 deadline for the submission of the final Nomination 'pack.'

- **Two references are required.** Additional references will not be accepted and will be removed from the nomination.

- If a nominee is returning to Higher Education after a period of professional practice or similar and is not able to draw on academic referees, please ensure that the chosen referees are able to comment on their preparedness for doctoral study.

- Nominees are advised to **identify referees who are independent of their proposed supervisory team** wherever possible. This is to avoid potential conflicts of interest that may pose a risk of disadvantage to the candidate. However, we recognise that there may be cases where the prospective supervisor is the best or only viable referee. In such cases, the referee is asked to provide a brief contextualising statement (via the Reference proforma).

- Referees may also be contacted by the Postgraduate Admissions Service and asked to provide separate references. This is independent of the AHRC DLA Studentship Competition.

Transcripts and Previous Qualifications

Lost/Unavailable Transcripts

Each year we receive queries from applicants returning to Higher Education after a lengthy period of time, and concerned about the following:

- They have proof of their qualifications but no transcripts.
- They no longer have proof of their qualifications or transcripts.
- The degree-awarding institution has since closed or has stated a substantial period of time before proof of qualifications or transcripts can be produced.

- In such instances we will accept evidence of the award of the degree only and/or an appended explanation as to why a transcript or evidence of qualifications is not available.

- In such instances the choice of referee and the content of the reference is vital. Either a referee should be able to speak to the applicant's past academic performance or be clear on the applicant's preparedness for doctoral research in terms their research skills and experience and / or professional practice.

- Please note, however, that the Postgraduate Admissions Service may have different requirements and applicants without the necessary evidence must contact the Service for further guidance.

Students Currently Taking a Masters Degree

- A provisional transcript is required that indicates marks attained to-date.

- Again, if this is not available, consider carefully the choice of referee and the content of the reference, which should address the applicant's past academic performance, or be clear on the applicant's preparedness for doctoral research.

Where the Transcripts are in a Language other than English

- **English translations** of the transcripts and evidence of previous qualifications **must** be provided.

Submission of the Nomination Form

Stage 1: 16:00 Friday 15 January 2027

- Applicants should submit their **completed** Nomination Form to the nominated contact within their school.

Stage 2: 16:00 Tuesday 23 February 2027

- Schools to submit their final five Nomination 'packs' to landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk, to include:

    1. The Nomination Form.
    2. Competency-based Assessment Form
    3. A Maximum of Two References.
    4. Undergraduate and Postgraduate Transcripts (not Degree Certificates), or evidence of provisional marks / marks received to date.
    5. Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

    Ideally, the full nomination should be submitted as one complete PDF, and preferably in the order above, if possible.

    Please use the following naming convention:

    NomineeSurname+Initial_School_, e.g. SmithJ_SHCA

- The **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** will be separated before the nomination is circulated for review. The Faculty Review Panel will not view the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form.

- We are required to submit anonymised statistics to the AHRC on EDI characteristics for all nominees and those who are successful. The AHRC DLA administrator will be able to identify who the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form belongs to, solely for the purposes of being able to make this distinction. All information reported to the AHRC and to the Faculty Review Panel will be anonymised.

- Incomplete nominations will not be considered under any circumstances.

- Amended or missing attachments (e.g., 'updated' proposals or references) received after the deadline will not be accepted.

- Full nominations received after the deadline will not be considered under any circumstances.

The Assessment Process and Guidance for Review Panels

General Guidance on the Evaluation of Nominations

- Consider the full Nomination Form and all supporting documentation.
- Scores should be explained in (**and be consistent with**) your comments, which should be sufficiently extensive for Review Panels at both stages to understand how the score was arrived at.
- A common issue that might disadvantage a nominee is a Review Panel (or panel member) failing to justify a set of particularly high (or low) marks in their comments.
- Comments **must** address all four areas of the Nomination Form: **Applicant**, **Research Proposal, Supervision**, and **Training and Development**. Please ensure that your comments match the grade descriptors for the mark you award, and that you make reference to each of these four areas in your comments.
- Please bear in mind that while formal academic qualifications are important indicators of academic achievement and potential, comparable consideration should be made to nominees with less conventional academic profiles, for example, mature nominees with significant careers in creative arts or other professional practice.

Please consider the following:

- The quality of the nominee, including their past academic and/or professional performance and experience, likely future performance, and their preparedness for doctoral study in terms of relevant research skills and experience.
- The quality of the research proposal, including the clarity and cogency of the research questions, awareness of relevant research in the field, the sources to be used, and the appropriateness of the proposed approach/methodology.
- The coherence, importance and viability of the proposed research, and particularly the feasibility of completion within 42 months (or 84 months part-time).
- The fit of the supervisory team, including supervisors' subject expertise in relation to the proposed research; ability to develop the nominee's skills and professional competence; evidence of ability to successfully supervise doctoral students across the supervisory team; and any involvement in postgraduate training.
- The degree to which the Nomination Form provides a detailed account of how the specific training and development needs of the nominee will be met.
- The quality of the research environment in terms of school/ departmental research strengths, interdisciplinary research groups, clusters, centres, institutes, and external partnerships, as well as the ways in which the nominee will be integrated into this environment.

Stage 1: Selection of Nominees by Schools

- Schools select their five strongest applicants to proceed to the second (and final) stage of the competition. Those nominees can then revise their Nomination Form with the support of their supervisory team, if recommended.

- Schools convene their own Review Panels and are encouraged to do so in line with EDI best practice.

- School Review Panels must use the Marking Scheme and Assessment Criteria provided in this guidance when assessing their nominees.

- School Review Panels must agree and record their scores and comments, including reasons for the selection or rejection of applicants, on a template to be provided by the DLA Administrator. This must be submitted to landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk by **16:00 Friday 5 February 2027.**

- Schools are responsible for notifying all applicants under consideration whether they have been successful or not at this stage of the competition.

- Schools can set their own internal deadline for the receipt of **References** and the **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form** from their final five nominees. This can be before the Tuesday 23 February 2027 submission deadline, but please make your nominees aware so they can inform their referees in good time.

Stage 2: The Faculty Review Panel

- Full nominations (minus the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form) will be made available to the Faculty Review Panel members on **Wednesday 24 February 2027,** usually via OneDrive (Sharepoint).

- Each nomination will be assessed by a minimum of three panel members, and nominations will be allocated by the DLA Administrator. Reviewers will not be asked to assess nominations where they are a nominated supervisor. Any conflict of interest that is not apparent from the Nomination Form should be raised with the DLA Administrator as soon as possible.

- Panel members considering nominations in Creative Practice must consult the portfolios and consider the practice methodologies articulated in Section 6 of the Nomination Form.

- Panel members assess the nominations assigned to them, and complete their individual marks and comments on a template to be provided by the DLA Administrator.

- The deadline for Faculty Review Panel members to submit their individual scores and comments to landscape.awards@newcastle.ac.uk is **Tuesday 7 March 2027**.

What Happens When Marks and Comments are Returned to the DLA Administrator

- The three sets of scores for each nominee are averaged, and all nominees ranked from highest to lowest.
- All Faculty Review Panel members are provided with a spreadsheet showing the final ranking, including the full sets of scores and the averages, and the full set of comments for each nominee.
- The Faculty Review Panel meet to discuss the consistency of the assessment process, and action any amendment (for example, scaling) deemed necessary.
- The Faculty Review Panel will confirm the final rankings from which the five available awards will be made and identify a list of candidates to be placed on a reserve list.
- The outcome of the Studentship Competition will be communicated to all Stage 2 nominees in the **week commending 22 March 2027** by the DLA Administrator, copying in the supervisory team, and the PGR Director and PS Postgraduate colleagues in the nominee's school.
- Should a successful nominee decline their award, the next highest-ranked nominee on the reserve list will be made an offer of an award, taking into account the cap on international students and the requirement to make two awards to Thematic nominations.

The Marking Scheme and Assessment Criteria

Both the School Review Panels (Stage 1), and the Faculty Review Panel (Stage 2), are asked to use the following criteria.

Please grade and comment on four aspects of the nomination:

- Applicant (20)
- Research Proposal (30)
- Supervision (15)
- Training and Development and Research Environment (15)

Giving an aggregate score out of 80.

Nominations that score below 50% of the mark in any area will automatically be considered ineligible for funding.

Applicant

In assessing the suitability of the applicant for an award, assessors must review the applicant's Competency-based Assessment Form, as well as prior qualifications, references, and their application form. Assessors should consider the following:

- Do the applicant's skills, qualifications and/or creative / professional / prior experience (particularly for applicants with non-standard academic trajectories) demonstrate their outstanding potential and preparedness for the proposed doctoral research?

- Do referees focus on the abilities of the applicant that make them suitable for postgraduate research, and do they support the applicant unreservedly?

- Do referees describe any special circumstances or contextual factors of the applicant that should be considered?

Grade	Descriptor
16-20	An *outstanding* applicant: Full evidence is provided of outstanding past academic, practice or professional/prior achievement, signaling extremely strong potential and outstanding preparedness for doctoral study. To be funded as a matter of utmost priority.
11-15	An *excellent* applicant: Excellence is fully evidenced in terms of academic, practice or professional/prior achievement, signaling strong potential, and a very high level of preparedness for doctoral study. To be funded as a matter of priority, though does not merit the highest priority rating.
9-10	A *strong* applicant: Solid evidence of very good past academic, practice or professional/prior performance and potential, and a high level of preparedness for doctoral study. Deserving of consideration for funding.
5-8	A *good* applicant: Evidence of good past academic, practice or professional/prior achievement and potential is provided, and the candidate is reasonably well prepared for doctoral study. But in the highly competitive context of the competition, it is not possible to be considered for funding.
3-4	An applicant with some strengths but about whom there are reservations concerning past academic, practice or professional/prior achievements, potential for original independent research, or preparedness for doctoral study. Not recommended for funding.
1-2	An applicant who falls significantly short of the expected standards in one or more areas. Not suitable for funding.

Research Proposal

In assessing the quality of the research proposal, assessors should consider the following:

- **Research questions:** Are the research question(s) or problem(s) clearly defined? How important is it that these questions should be addressed? How timely are they?

- **Research context:** What other research is being, or has been, conducted in this area? What contribution will this project make to the advancement of knowledge and understanding in the field? Has the applicant placed their proposal in an appropriate context, giving due consideration to other work in the field?

- **Research methods:** How, during the PhD, will the applicant seek to answer the questions or address the problems? Is there an adequate rationale for their chosen research methods? Do the research methods provide an appropriate means by which to answer the research question(s)? Is the research likely to raise ethical or safety issues and, if so, are these addressed in the proposal?

- **Viability:** Does the applicant provide evidence that the project can be feasibly completed within up to three and a half years of full-time funded study or up to seven years of part-time funded study? Have the costs and resource implications of undertaking the fundamental research been adequately considered?

  (PTO for Grades and Descriptors)

Grade	Descriptor
26-30	An *outstanding* research proposal: Research questions or problems are clear and cogent, and the proposal demonstrates a comprehensive awareness of the research context and of the contribution that the research will make to the field. The applicant has made a compelling case both for the intellectual and social importance of this research and for the choice of research methods or approach. The research is demonstrably feasible within the period of supervised study. Any ethical or safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. To be funded as a matter of the highest priority.
22-25	An *excellent* research proposal: Research questions or problems are clear and cogent, and the proposal demonstrates a sound awareness of the research context and of the contribution that the research will make to the field. The applicant carefully addresses the intellectual and social importance of the research and research methods, or approach are well justified. The research is feasible within the period of supervised study, and any ethical or safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. To be funded as a matter of priority, though does not merit the highest priority rating.
18-21	A very *strong* research proposal: Research questions are clear and cogent, and the proposal demonstrates a sound awareness of the research context and of the contribution that the research will make to the field. The methodology or approach is appropriate, and the research is likely to be feasible within the period of supervised study. Any ethical or safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. Worthy of consideration for funding.
15-17	A *strong* research proposal: Research questions are clear, and the applicant demonstrates awareness of the research context and the contribution that the proposed research will make. Methods or approach seem appropriate, and the research is probably feasible within the period of supervised study. Any ethical or safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. Fundable, but not as a matter of priority.
12-14	A *good* research proposal: Research questions are identified, and the proposal demonstrates some awareness of both the research context and the contribution the research will make. There is some awareness of its intellectual importance and methodological requirements. The research may be feasible within the period of supervised study and ethical or safety issues have been identified. In the competitive context of the competition, the proposal is not recommended for funding.
9-11	A research proposal with some strong aspects, but with weaknesses in one of the following areas: research questions/ problems, awareness of research context, contribution to the discipline, intellectual significance, methodology, feasibility, or ethical or safety considerations. Not fundable.
5-8	A research proposal with some strong aspects, but with weaknesses in more than one of more of the following areas: research questions/ problems, awareness of research context, contribution to the discipline, intellectual significance, methodology, feasibility, or ethical or safety considerations. Not fundable.
1-4	A research proposal with serious shortcomings in one or more areas. Not fundable.

Supervision

This section of the Nomination Form should comment on the suitability of the supervisory team, noting the ability of the supervisory team to successfully supervise the project and, where appropriate, any plans for mentoring, training or support for supervisors. Research expertise and publications that are relevant to the applicant's project can be included, however it is not advisable to concentrate on the supervisors' research excellence to the detriment of demonstrating the excellence of the fit between supervisor and research project. All applicants require two Newcastle University supervisors, at least one of which must be in the AHRC subject or thematic area the applicant is applying to. External supervisors are allowed, but only in addition to the two Newcastle University supervisors.

A strong nomination will be one in which the supervisors have expertise in an area closely related to the nominee's proposal. In a weak nomination, the supervisor will not be expert in the area.

Grade	Descriptor
12-15	An *outstandingly close* fit between supervisory expertise and the proposed project, and an excellent track record commensurate with the supervisors' career stage and institutional context. To be funded as a matter of the highest priority.
9-11	An *excellent* fit between supervisory expertise and the proposed project and a strong track record commensurate with the supervisors' career stage and institutional context. To be funded as a priority, though does not merit the highest priority rating.
7-8	A *strong* supervisory fit. Worthy of consideration for funding.
5-6	A *good* supervisory fit but may lack a track record of supervision commensurate with career stage. In the competitive context of the competition, not possible to be considered for funding.
3-4	Supervisory arrangements that have some strengths, but with weaknesses in fit between the project and expertise of the supervisory team and a lack of track record commensurate with career stage. Not appropriate for funding.
1-2	Significant shortcomings in one or more areas; not suitable for funding.

Training and Research Environment

The nomination should address the ways in which the research strengths of the school, as well as any interdisciplinary research groups, clusters, centres, and institutes, specialised facilities/resources, and external partnerships are relevant to the applicant's research project. It should also specify how the applicant will be integrated into this environment. This section of the Nomination Form should also identify any skills training and professional development needed for the successful completion of the research project. This should be specific to the applicant and their project; **please do not include general statements about the generic skills training available within your School**. When considering training and development requirements, schools are encouraged to look beyond Newcastle University to identify possibilities for research group participation and training opportunities, including those provided by external organisations and the AHRC Northern training hub.

A strong nomination will be where: the applicant will be well integrated into the school and/or appropriate interdisciplinary structures; facilities or resources are available to support the applicant's research; and the applicant's training needs have been fully considered, along with a clear sense of how these will be met. In a weak nomination, the school will not be a suitable host for the proposed research and/or there will be no interdisciplinary structures to provide a supportive research environment. A weaker nomination may be characterised by limited consideration of the training needs of the applicant, which may constrain their ability to conduct the research.

Research environments vary for many reasons (including their capacity to attract self-funded PhD students). We ask assessors to recognise that size alone is not necessarily a good indicator of quality. A relatively small school with a cluster of researchers highly appropriate to the project may be a better environment than a much larger school that lacks a close connection to the applicant's work.

(PTO for Grades and Descriptors)

Grade	Descriptor
12-15	*Outstanding* research environment: Clear and compelling evidence that the applicant will be extremely well integrated into appropriate research groups/clusters/centres/institutes, and that their training and development needs have been fully considered. To be funded as a matter of the highest priority.
9-11	*Excellent* research environment: Evidence that the applicant will be very well integrated into appropriate research groups/clusters/centres/institutes. Most of the applicant's training and development needs have been carefully considered. To be funded as a priority, though does not merit the highest priority rating.
7-8	A *strong* research environment: A strong sense that the applicant will be well integrated into appropriate research groups/clusters/centres/institutes. Some of the applicant's training and development needs have been considered. Worthy of consideration for funding.
5-6	A *good* research environment: Evidence that there are research groups/clusters/centres/institutes into which the applicant could be integrated. Training needs have been addressed, but cursorily. In the competitive context of the competition, not possible to be considered for funding.
3-4	A research environment that has some strengths, but with weaknesses in respect of school research strengths or interdisciplinary infrastructure. Insufficient attention given to research training needs. Not appropriate for funding.
1-2	Significant shortcomings in one or more areas; not suitable for funding.