

NORTHERN BRIDGE
CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL
TRAINING
PARTNERSHIP



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

18 October 2023

2023/24 Competition Briefing

Programme for today

1. Introductions
2. What is the Northern Bridge Consortium?
3. Awards available
4. Subjects covered and Eligibility
5. The application process
6. Maximising your chances of success
7. What we're looking for in applications
8. Collaborative Doctoral Award (student-led) applications
9. Creative Practice applications
10. Key deadlines

What is the Northern Bridge Consortium?

We are a Doctoral Training Partnership funded by the AHRC to administer PhD studentship funding via an annual competition.

The partnership covers all of the universities in the NE of England and Northern Ireland: Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Queen's, Ulster, Sunderland & Teesside.

We can fund PGR research in all the AHRC's disciplinary areas (except Scandinavian and Australasian Studies);

As well as administering the studentship funding, we run a world-class training programme for our students.

Directors

- Prof Jonathan Miles-Watson, Durham University
northernbridge.director@durham.ac.uk
- Prof Ian O’Flynn, Newcastle University
nbdirect@newcastle.ac.uk
- Prof Matthew Potter, Northumbria University
matthew.potter@northumbria.ac.uk
- Profs Fran Brearton & Therese Murphy, Queen’s University Belfast
northernbridge.director@qub.ac.uk
- Prof Andrew Livingstone, Sunderland University
andrew.livingstone@sunderland.ac.uk
- Dr Rachel Carroll, Teesside University
r.carroll@tees.ac.uk
- Prof Karen Fleming, Ulster University
k.fleming@ulster.ac.uk

Administrators

- Katrin Krauss, Durham University
northernbridge.admin@durham.ac.uk
- Carole Palmer and Sarah Rylance, Newcastle University
northernbridge.admin@newcastle.ac.uk
- Andrea Percival, Northumbria University
northernbridge.admin@northumbria.ac.uk
- Naomi Harland, Queen's University Belfast
northernbridge.admin@qub.ac.uk
- Dianne Hutchinson, Sunderland University
faci-research@sunderland.ac.uk
- Kirsty Metcalfe, Teesside University
k.metcalfe@tees.ac.uk
- Allison Allen, Ulster University
northernbridge.admin@ulster.ac.uk



Vision &
Strategy

Collaboration

World class research
support

Working outside the
academy with partners

Employability and the
future

Regional development

Training

As a Doctoral Training Partnership, we offer much more than funding for PhD students.

We host an innovative training programme, with a mix of mandatory events and bespoke optional training.

We put out regular calls for training ideas and events from both our students and our colleagues.

We aim to support training for skills suitable for academic and non-academic careers.

Placements

In the Northern Bridge Consortium, every student has the opportunity to undertake a placement (minimum 21 working days; up to six months FTE).

This will support their skills development and training, widen their experience, and support both academic and non-academic future careers.

These placements will be fully funded by NBC.

2024 Competition overview

- The 2024 competition is now open for applications.
- We will be awarding up to 63 studentships per annum:
 - 48 standard studentships
 - 13 collaborative doctoral studentships
 - 2 Equality Action Award Studentships.
- Successful applicants will receive 3.5 years of fees & stipend funding, plus access to the additional funding streams, including placements. We also fund PhDs part-time.
- Students will have the opportunity to undertake a placement during their programme of study.
- Successful applicants will start their PhDs in October 2024.

Timeline

Competition opened 9 October 2023

By 9 January 2024, all applicants must have applied for a PhD place at their institution

Internal sifts take place to decide which applicants will go forward to the Northern Bridge competition

20 February 2024 (by 4pm) nomination forms to NBC

By 15 March 2024 subject panels will have scored nomination forms

25-26 March 2024 Moderation process and Studentship Committee

From 28 March 2024 (subject to individual institutional processes), results announced

Awards available

- Three types of award:
 - Standard Awards
 - Student-led Collaborative Doctoral Awards
 - Equality Action Awards
- Duration of doctoral studentships is 3.5 years full-time or 7 years part-time.
- Students may apply to extend their period of funded study (though not the candidature of their PhD) by between 21 days and six months (FTE) to undertake a placement.
- Part-time students cannot also work full time.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Northern Bridge is an inclusive community, where everybody – staff and students – are treated with dignity and respect.
- This is part of our vision of how research excellence comes about.
- We aim to ensure that no-one is at a disadvantage – whether at application stage or as part of our cohort – because of who they are, and we undertake Positive Action to support this aim.
- We welcome all applicants irrespective of their gender, socio-economic background or ethnicity.
- We explicitly encourage assessment panels to recognise this in their assessment of a candidate's preparedness for doctoral study.
- As part of our annual competition, we include a critical friend in the form of an EDI champion, who reviews our competition process, paperwork and outcomes to help us be as inclusive as we can be.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Examples

Northern Bridge is committed to tackling inequality, promoting diversity and fostering inclusion within postgraduate research

- EDI Action Plan (endorsed by the AHRC)
- EDI Together – co-created working group consisting of students from across the Consortium and Academic Director (an outcome of the above)

Examples of actions

- Revisions to guidance provided to Referees and introduction of a Reference template
- Enhancements to EDI monitoring processes – data on low-income background / household captured from 2022-23
- Launch of Equality Action Award Studentships for 2022-23 Competition

Interdisciplinary Applications

We strongly support interdisciplinary applications.

We ask applicants to limit themselves to indicating TWO disciplines formally although others can be brought out in the project proposal part of the nomination form.

We would expect to see the interdisciplinarity of any project expressed in the methodologies as well as the research description or questions.

We would also expect to see supervisory teams that represent & bridge disciplines.

4. Subjects in
which
Northern
Bridge offers
studentships
*Panel A =
Histories,
Cultures, and
Heritage*

- Archaeology
- Classics
- Criminal Law and Criminology
- Cultural and Museum Studies
- Cultural Geography
- Development Studies
- History
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Law and Legal Studies
- Library and Information Studies
- Philosophy
- Policy, Arts Management and Creative Industries
- Political Science and International Studies
- Theology, Divinity and Religion

Subjects in
which
Northern
Bridge offers
studentships
(ctd.)
*Panel B =
Creative and
Performing Arts*

- Applied Arts: History, Theory and Practice
- Architecture History, Theory and Practice
- Design
- Digital Arts: History, Theory and Practice
- Drama and Theatre Studies
- Film-based Media: History, Theory and Practice
- Fine Art: History, Theory and Practice
- Media and Communication Studies
- Music
- Photography: History, Theory and Practice

Subjects in
which
Northern
Bridge offers
studentships
(ctd.)
*Panel C =
Languages and
Literatures*

- Asiatic and Oriental Studies
- Celtic Studies
- Creative Writing
- English Language and Literature
- Ethnography and Anthropology
- French Studies
- German Studies (including Dutch and Yiddish)
- Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin American Studies
- Interpreting and Translation
- Italian Studies
- Linguistics
- Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages and Culture

4. Eligibility (from the AHRC's Training Grant Funding Guide, Version 3.0, January 2020)

- 'Every student, their subject, course of study, and the RO at which they are studying must meet the eligibility criteria set out in the *UKRI Terms and Conditions of Training Grants* and *UKRI Training Grant Guide*, along with any scheme-specific guidance. Information on the AHRC's subject domain can be found in the *AHRC's Research Funding Guide*.'

4. Eligibility (from the AHRC's Training Grant Funding Guide, Version 3.0, January 2020)

- 'Academic eligibility: Those applying for a doctoral studentship should normally have, or be studying for, a Master's degree or similar postgraduate qualification. They should have met all the course requirements prior to the start date of their AHRC doctoral studentship.'
- 'If a student does not have experience of formal postgraduate study, they may be eligible for a studentship only if they can demonstrate evidence of sustained experience beyond their undergraduate degree level that is specifically relevant to their proposed research topic, and could be considered equivalent to Master's study. The RO must have evidence as to how the training and development the student has received is equivalent to that obtained through a Master's course and, therefore, prepares them to continue to doctoral study.'

5. The Application Process

(1) APPLICATION

Applicants apply to ONE of the seven Northern Bridge Consortium universities.

Guidance on how to apply is available at:

www.northernbridge.ac.uk/apply

Applicants need to attach the following paperwork to their application:

- (i) Current CV (2 sides of A4 maximum);
- (ii) Research proposal (check with your subject area contact for word length + bibliography);
- (iii) Contact details of two referees;
- (iv) Transcripts of previous qualifications.

The Application Process (ctd)

(2) NOMINATION

- If the application is deemed to be sufficiently strong, applicants will be nominated by the Subject Area at the university to which the applicant has applied for formal consideration by Northern Bridge.
- If the applicant is nominated, a Nomination Form will be sent to the applicant for completion. Section A of the nomination is for completion by the applicant; it will include space for academic track record and research proposal.
- Section B is for the Subject Area Contact and supervisory team to complete; it will include sections on the supervisory team, the applicant's training & development needs, and the research environment by which it will be supported.

Key objectives of Northern Bridge

- Prepare award-holders to undertake **world-leading research**;
 - Enhance their **skills and employability**;
 - Address recognized **national skills shortages**;
 - Enable NB students to contribute to our Consortium's identity and direction;
 - Prepare award-holders to be **future leaders**;
 - **Raise the profile** of Arts & Humanities research within our universities and outside them (in our cities, regions, the UK and internationally)
-
- **Tell us how you and your project will do these things.**
 - **Do you have a track record/experience – however small – that will support your case?**

6. Maximising the chances of success

- Applicants should familiarise themselves with the Northern Bridge application procedure (reading everything including the marking scheme and assessment criteria).
- Applicants should speak to Subject Area Contacts as soon as possible.
- Applicants should maintain contact throughout with prospective supervisors;
- Applicants should sketch out the research proposal early to allow time for refinement and revision.
- Applicants should discuss their training needs with the prospective supervisors: “what will you need be able to do in order to complete your project? Do you need any specialist or technical skills? Do you need language training? How will you meet these training needs?” Prospective supervisors or subject area contact will complete this portion of the nomination form, but it is important to have discussed training so that they can complete the form fully and effectively.

7. What we are looking for

- An excellent academic track record: a first or high upper second first degree, and performance at or around distinction level in a master's qualification.
- For those who have been out of academia for a period and may not have a formal master's qualification, evidence that equivalent knowledge and research skills have been acquired through professional practice.
- An excellent research proposal that addresses 'clearly-articulated research questions, issues or problems, set in a clear context of other research in that area, and using appropriate research methods and/or approaches' (AHRC research funding guide);
- A research proposal articulated in terms that are accessible to non-specialists;
- A comprehensive assessment of the training needs;
- An absolutely professional approach to all aspects of the completion and presentation of the application.

8. Collaborative Doctoral Awards

A CDA is an award in which:

- supervision and training are provided by both a university and a non-university organisation
- the project is developed by the student in close collaboration with the non-university partner and the university supervisors
- the non-university organisation benefits from defined outcomes as a result of the student's doctoral research
- the student normally spends a substantial portion of the period of doctoral study at the non-university organisation.
- NB: it is essential that conversations between prospective applicants, the non-university organisation and the university supervisors begin at an early stage.

8. What makes a strong CDA application?

Generally speaking:

- An application/project that has clearly been developed with **the partner and its theme at its heart** (i.e. not an afterthought! Make it clear that you could not do the project without this partner).
- That this is expressed very clearly in **defined outcomes** (try to avoid vague, sweeping statements); e.g., an exhibition, a digital database – whatever it might be.
- That these outcomes articulate benefits **to you**, and to **the partner**.
- Think about the whole course of the life of the PhD – what are your priorities e.g. in training, skills, your career after the PhD? Build this in as much as possible.
- It is worth going back to the **key objectives** of Northern Bridge too ...

8. Priorities from now to January

Work with your **proposed partner** to develop the strongest possible application. Think about:

- **benefits** of your project to you and to the partner
- is what you are proposing to do **feasible**?
- look at current partnership awards on our website for ideas.

Work with your **proposed academic supervisors** to shape:

- the methodology
- the research context
- identify any training you might need to complete the project
- **DRAFT, DRAFT AND DRAFT AGAIN!** 😊

9. Creative Practice applications

- Creative practice – in the university context: research-focused.
- About exploring intellectual and research questions that your creative practice can illuminate.
- Underpinned by existing bodies of research and critical work, referenced in the application.
- Methodologies are important too: think about how your creative practice will help you explore your research questions.

Questions?

