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| Guide for Candidates for AHRC North-West Consortium Doctoral Awards (September 2023 entry) |

**INTRODUCTION**

This guidance is for candidates to the AHRC North-West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDTP). The NWCDTP consists of the Universities of Liverpool, Lancaster, Salford, Keele, Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan, and the Royal Northern College of Music. The NWCDTP provides funding for postgraduate researchers at these institutions. This guidance sets out the types of awards, eligibility and the procedures for application.

**It is important that you read these notes carefully before making your application. The sections are as follows:**

[**The Funding Schemes**](#Funding)

[**Eligibility**](#Eligibility)

[**Financial Basis of Awards**](#Financial)

[**The Application Process**](#Application)

[**Assessment of Applications (process)**](#Assess)

[**Assessment Criteria**](#Criteria)

[**Application Timetable**](#Timetable)

[**Application Guidance**](#Guidance)

[**Appendix 1: List of Pathways**](#App1)

[**Appendix 2: Contact List**](#App2)

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| 1. **THE FUNDING SCHEMES**
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The AHRC NWCDTP provides funding to enable candidates to study at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK at doctoral level. The postgraduate awards programme is administered as follows:

**2 years full time/ 4 years part time funding**

This scheme provides support for up to two years of full-time study/ four years of part-time study for candidates who are registered on the first year full time/ first two years part time of a programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree**.** Candidates past these levels will not be eligible for funding.

**3 years/ 6 years part time funding**

This scheme provides support for up to three years of full-time study/ six years of part-time study for a programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree.

In most cases studentships will be awarded on the above basis, but you can apply to extend the funded period to 3.5 or 4 years full time/ 7 or 8 years part time, if your project:

* Involves a period of intensive skills development (e.g. difficult language learning) identified at application or during the first year of funding (in discussion with the supervisory team). We use particular definitions for ‘difficult’ languages, please contact us directly for clarification if necessary.
* Involves additional or complex methodologies requiring additional training identified during the first year of funding (in discussion with the supervisory team).
* Includes a **placement** with a partner organisation applied for at any point during the funded period.

The NWCDTP Allocation Committee may decide to award a longer studentship if one or more of the above-mentioned training requirements have been identified in the application.

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| 1. **ELIGIBILITY**
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**Candidates need to be aware that the deadline for admissions under the NWCDTP funding scheme is 13 January 2023 at the latest (please note that some institutions may have an earlier deadline for admissions – please check with your local administrator (**[**Appendix 2**](#App2)**).**

**You MUST have applied to your programme of study by this date or your funding application will not be eligible.**

* The NWCDTP is committed to working with candidates from underrepresented communities and those from non-traditional academic backgrounds. You will be able to demonstrate your talent and your experience on the application form, and your referees can also provide additional information that we might need to make our decision. See <http://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/EDI>.
* Successful candidates typically have qualifications equivalent to a good honours degree (first or upper second class level) and/ or professional experience and qualifications and/ or practical experience. There is a clear outline of how we make our decision in [‘Assessment Criteria’](#Criteria), below.
* You must be planning to study on an NWCDTP Pathway (see [Appendix 1](#App1) for a list of Pathways).
* We consider full time and part time applications to be equally important.
* Co-supervision across institutions is welcomed. This may not always be possible, or ideal, of course, but we recommend that you think carefully about having as broad a supervisory team as possible.
* Degrees gained outside the UK are recognised. The NWCDTP bases its assessments of qualifications attained outside the UK on the British Council’s NARIC guide. For non-UK qualifications, transcripts in English as well as details in the original language must be provided with the application form.
* The NWCDTP may offer up to 30% of its awards to International PhD candidates (definition below). All funded NWCDTP studentships, whether UK or International, will be eligible for a full award which includes a stipend to support living costs and fees at the standard UKRI home fee rate. It is crucial to note that **we will only cover tuition fees up to the Home rate.** This is £4,596 in 2022/23 (exact rate for 2023/24 subject to confirmation from UKRI). International tuition fees are usually substantially higher than this sum. In some institutions, these additional tuition fees may be paid for in the form of an additional bursary to the NWCDTP studentship, but in other cases it may be necessary for International candidates (including EU and EEA) to secure additional funding to cover the additional fees. It is therefore crucial that International candidates contact their local PGR Administrator (see [Appendix 2](#App2)) before applying, to find out what the local arrangements are for your programme.
* To be classed as a Home candidate you must meet the following criteria:
	+ Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
	+ Have settled status, or
	+ Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
	+ Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

If you do not meet the criteria above, you will be classed as an International student. You can refer to UKRI Terms and Conditions for Training Grants for full details <https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

* Candidates who have already gained or completed the requirements for a doctoral degree in any subject, however funded, are not eligible to apply for NWCDTP funding.

**Eligibility for Named Studentships:**

The NWCDTP is committed to equality of opportunity and working to ensure our cohort reflects the diverse communities we serve. We have introduced a range of positive measures to assist in achieving these commitments. The introduction of these measures follows a review of our recruitment processes and forms part of a plan we have developed to achieve greater diversity and better equality outcomes (see <https://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/about/equality-diversity-inclusion/> ).

**In 2022/23, we will recruit directly to the following Named Studentships**:

* Global Majority or Global Majority heritage studentship – recognising that our PGR cohort does not reflect the diversity of the UK population, this studentship is open to a Global Majority or Global Majority heritage candidate. This studentship is available for Home and International candidates.
* Philosophy Pathway studentship – recognising the gender inequality in the discipline this studentship is for a female scholar (female in this context meaning anyone identifying as a woman) seeking to study within the Philosophy Pathway. This studentship is available for Home and International candidates.
* Broken Pipeline studentship – recognising the clear inequality within the HE sector this studentship is for a UK-domiciled candidate from an underrepresented community. This studentship is for candidates who feel that they are from backgrounds or communities that are underrepresented within UK Higher Education. If you check this box, please additionally email a statement (200 words max) outlining your reasons to Jerome.degroot@manchester.ac.uk. This statement **must have** been received by the **deadline for application**. Your information may be subject to checking if you are offered a studentship. We will keep your information confidential and destroy it after the recruitment process.

You may elect to be considered for more than one of these studentships. Your application will be considered as part of the standard award competition and will be subject to the same assessment criteria and schedule.

**Application workshops:**

We will be running online application workshops for those who are interested in applying on the dates below:

Thursday 24 Nov 2022, 12-1 (GMT): <https://zoom.us/j/98940527857> (Passcode: 890167)

Tuesday 11 Jan 2023, 10-11 (GMT): <https://zoom.us/j/96352771217> (Passcode: 323935)

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| **3.** **THE FINANCIAL BASIS OF THE AWARD** |

The AHRC NWCDTP studentship award provides funds to meet:

* The payment of approved fees to the institution
* A maintenance grant

The level of the grant for the academic year 2022-23 is as follows:

Maintenance Grant: £17,668 (or part-time pro rata)

An additional disability allowance is available where appropriate.

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| **4.** **THE APPLICATION PROCESS** |

**First stage – Institutional application**

To apply for a NWCDTP award you must have **applied** for a place on a programme at one of the seven NWCDTP institutions by 13th January 2023 at the latest (please check with your institution’s local administrator as some institutions may have an earlier deadline for this). Your application for admission onto your chosen programme must be **complete** by this deadline.

You should apply to one institution for admission onto your chosen postgraduate programme using the application form online:

Lancaster: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/how-to-apply-for-postgraduate-study/>

Liverpool: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/>

Manchester: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduate/howtoapply/>

Manchester Metropolitan: <http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/postgraduate-research-course/>

Keele: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/pgresearch/howtoapply/>

RNCM: <http://rncm.ac.uk/research/programme/apply/>

Salford: <http://www.salford.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/applying/applying-for-research>

You are allowed to apply to various institutions in the consortium for a place on a programme. However, you must choose **only one** institution through which you wish to apply for funding from the NWCDTP.

**Second stage – NWCDTP Funding application**

Once you have applied to your institution, you can now apply for NWCDTP funding. You fill in [a NWCDTP Funding Application form](https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=63933). This form should be sent to the Postgraduate Office of the institution you wish to study at (see [Appendix 2](#App2) for contact details).

You should submit your **NWCDTP Funding Application Form by 3rd February 2023 (5pm)**. The Funding Application form CANNOT be changed after submission.

Your application will be judged on the basis of your NWCDTP funding application form, your references, and your academic transcripts. See [‘Assessment Criteria’](#Criteria), below.

The references and transcripts submitted in support of your application for a place at your chosen institution will suffice, but updated documents may be submitted. This is advised if your new documents provide further information, for instance on your performance on a master’s degree currently in progress. If you are applying for 2 years full time/ 4 years part time funding (that is, you are a current PhD student) new reference letters should be submitted with comments regarding your progress on your PhD to date. There is advice on what to include in [reference letters below](#referee).

If you decide to submit updated documents these must be received by the relevant admissions office by the deadline of **3rd February 2023**.

There is only one closing date for funding applications each year and there is no flexibility on this date**.**

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| **5.** **ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS - PROCESS** |

**a. The Pathway Panels**

Your application will initially be assessed by an **Institutional Pathway Group**. The group consists of academics from within the relevant pathway at the institution you intend to register at. Each application is judged on its own merits based on the information provided in the NWCDTP Funding Application Form and your transcripts / references. The Panel agrees a mark for each application and applications are then ranked.

The Institutional Pathway Groups will then forward their selected applications for consideration by the **Pathway Panel**. This consists of one nominated pathway lead for each NWCDTP institution represented in this pathway. This panel will decide which applications will go through the final Studentship Allocation Committee.

Finally, the applications which have passed the previous two stages are presented to the NWCDTP **Studentship Allocation Committee** by the overall Pathway Lead. This Committee will then decide on studentship allocation across the NWCDTP.

**b. Outcome of Application**

Successful candidates will be notified by 5th May 2023. Candidates who are on the reserve list will also be notified, as will those who have been unsuccessful. If you are successful in being nominated for an award, you will be asked to formally confirm your acceptance.

 **c. Taking up an Award**

Award holders are normally expected to begin their programme of study in **September 2023** and holders of a full award will receive the first instalment of their maintenance grant in early October. In certain circumstances, such as illness, or where there is a need to give a period of notice to an employer, we will consider deferring the start date of a doctoral programme, normally by up to three months (with approval from the institutional School/Faculty PGR office). Any application for postponement must be made immediately through the institution in which you intend to register. You should write to the institution, in advance, including supporting letters from your potential supervisor.

If you are unable to take up your award in the year in which it was awarded, it will be rescinded and you will have to re-apply in the competition in the following year, should an award be available. You will need to inform us of your decision at the earliest possible stage, in writing, by letter or e-mail.

The continuation of doctoral awards is subject to the submission of a satisfactory annual report at the end of each year of the award and you are subject to the Institution and school/Faculty’s standard monitoring and progression processes.

Successful candidates are required to attend an induction session and a residential in the First Year of their programme.

**d. Change in circumstances**

Studentships are awarded for a particular programme of study at the Universities of Keele, Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester, ManMet, Salford, or at the RNCM. Requests to make changes to the awards are only considered by the NWCDTP studentship committee in very exceptional circumstances and only if the reasons are fully and clearly explained.

**e. Resubmitting Applications**

If you are unsuccessful in one year's competition you may apply in the next year's competition providing you continue to meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

**f. Appeals Process**

The competition is fierce and many highly qualified and strongly supported candidates do not get an award. Each application is carefully scrutinised by the assessors, and their decision is reached in the context of competing applications and an overview of the entire cohort. Individual feedback on applications will not be available. The NWCDTP will be unable to notify unsuccessful candidates who did not make it as far as the NWCDTP Studentship Committee.

The individual Universities have complaints and appeals procedures, details of which can be found on their web sites:

Lancaster: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/strategic-planning-and-governance/student-complaints/>

Liverpool: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/student-administration/policies-procedures/complaints/>

Manchester: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/admissions/policies-procedures/>

Manchester Metropolitan: <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-case-management/guidance-for-students/student-complaints-procedure/>

RNCM: <https://www.rncm.ac.uk/about/college-information/complaints/>

Keele: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/sas/academicservices/studentappealscomplaintsandconduct/>

Salford: <https://www.salford.ac.uk/askus/admin-essentials/complaints>

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| **6.** **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA** |

Competition for studentships is fierce. Pathways will score each candidate a mark on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest, 1 the lowest) for their **research proposal** and their **preparedness for research**.

**The Research Proposal**

The quality of the **research proposal** is judged in terms of (i) cogency of exposition, (ii) structure and rigour, (iii) originality, (iv) design of the research and its feasibility, and (v) fit of the project with supervisory team and NWCDTP. The assessors will look for evidence of an ability to articulate a research project, a coherent plan for doctoral study, and a good awareness of the place of the research within the current field.

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| Grade | Descriptor |
| 9-10 | Outstanding proposal in terms of both cogency and originality. The research questions are excellent, there is strong engagement with the wider field, the methodology is appropriate and perhaps innovative. The intellectual importance of the project is clear and the proposal outlines in detail the contribution that the project will make to the field. The supervisory team is excellent and the research is feasible within the period of study. The project fits very well within the NWCDTP. A high priority for funding. |
| 7-8 | A very strong proposal outlined clearly. Research questions are clear and well outlined, there is an understanding of the wider field and the methodology is appropriate. The candidate makes a good case for the intellectual importance of the project. The supervisory team is well matched to the project. The project fits within the NWCDTP. The research is likely to be feasible within the period of study. Worthy of considering for funding.  |
| 3-6 | A promising proposal with some limited weaknesses that need to be addressed. Research questions are clear, and there is some understanding of the wider field. The methodology is solid and the candidate has some awareness of the intervention that the project makes in the discipline or field. The supervisory team is good and the project will probably be feasible within the period of study. In the context of the NWCDTP competition this will not be possible to be considered for funding.  |
| 1-2 | Problematic proposal – would need further work before it could be firmly supported. |

**The Candidate**

Panels will assess the candidate’s **preparedness for research** based on (i) career information provided in the application (including information on marks achieved so far as reported in the references and/or transcripts), as well as any relevant practical or professional achievement, (ii) references, (iii) relevant previous experience (academic and professional) including technical competence such as language skills, and (iv) how the programme of study will contribute to their long-term career plans.

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| Grade  | Descriptor |
| 9-10 | An outstanding candidate with strong evidence of exceptional academic, practical, or professional achievement. Candidates in this zone would typically have achieved a high first/ Distinction, predominantly in the range 75-80, and in some cases at 80+ (or clear evidence that they have the potential to reach that level). Candidates in this zone will often have been awarded academic, artistic, professional or other prizes. If appropriate impressive professional or practical experience is outlined in detail. Excellent references discuss in detail the candidate’s high-calibre intellectual background, suitability for research, and research skills. Candidate demonstrates excellent potential for original independent research and a strong sense of the importance of doctoral study to their career development. To be funded as a matter of priority. |
| 7-8 | A very strong candidate with excellent academic, practical, or professional achievement. Candidates in this zone would typically have achieved a first class/ Distinction, predominantly in the range 70-75 (or clear evidence that they have the potential to reach that level). If appropriate good professional or practical experience is outlined. References are strong and discuss the candidate’s ability and suitability for research. Candidate shows good potential for original independent research and a sense of the importance of doctoral study to their career development. Worth considering for funding. |
| 3-6 | A solid candidate with evidence of good academic, practical or professional achievement. Candidates in this zone would typically have achieved a 2:1/ Merit (or there is clear evidence that the candidate has the potential to reach that level). If appropriate there is some evidence of professional or practical experience. References are solid and discuss the candidate’s background. The candidate is reasonably well prepared for doctoral study but in the context of the NWCDTP competition not to be considered for funding.  |
| 1-2 | Candidate is significantly below the expected standards. Candidates would have achieved a pass at MA level and comparatively low marks in their first degree (marks in the 50s). If appropriate there is little evidence of professional or practical experience. References are brief. We are very unlikely to support candidates with 2:2s, unless the first degree result was an aberration explained by the referees, or if they have a high-graded masters to enhance this. |

For some Pathways with substantial practical aspects the Institutional Pathway Group will be able to access additional material which is submitted through the admission process. The Institutional Pathway Group will make their decision using those materials as well as transcripts and references when applicable. The NWCDTP Pathway panel *will not* have access to the additional material due to time constraints and the difficulty of distributing the material around, it will rely on notes from the Institutional Pathway Groups.

Candidates may wish to discuss issues related to disability or extenuating circumstances with their referees and, if necessary, grant permission to include relevant information in the reference letter. It is the student’s responsibility to contact and chase up relevant references in this case. Pathway Representatives/ Leaders can take the relevant information provided by the referees into consideration when accessing the application.

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| **7.** **APPLICATION TIMETABLE** |

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| **Friday 13th January 2023** | Admissions Deadline at each institution (please note this may differ at some institutions and you are advised to check with them directly) |
| **Friday 3rd February 2023** | Deadline for NWCDTP Funding applications to be submitted to relevant institution |
| **Around 5th May 2023** | Successful and reserve candidates to be notified of the outcome |
| **Friday 19th May 2023** | Deadline for successful candidates to confirm acceptance of the award. |
| **From September 2023** | Start of the programme under the NWCDTP |

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| **8.** **APPLICATION GUIDANCE** |

These notes will help you fill in the [application form.](https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=63933)

1. Studentships available:

Please tick the scheme you would like to be considered for. If you are a current postgraduate researcher, in your first year (full time) or first two years (part time) then you should choose ‘2 years FT/ 4 years PT funding’.

1. Named studentships:

If you wish to be considered for one of the named studentships, please indicate so here. Your application will be considered as part of the wider award competition and will be subject to the same assessment criteria and schedule.

1. Name, address and nationality

We need to be able to contact you between April and September. Under ’Address' you should provide the address at which you can be contacted for the majority of this period, if this is different to the address you have given on the Institution application form. Should you be unavailable during this period, you may provide the name and address of someone who can correspond for you in your absence.

1. Project details
* Mode of attendance

Please indicate whether you will be studying full or part time. Further information on awards and stipends can be found under [‘Financial Basis of the Award’](#Financial).

* Project title

The title of the PhD project should be entered.

* Programme/Pathway

Please indicate the pathway through which you have applied (further details of pathways can be found in [Appendix 1](#App1)).

1. PhD Proposal
	1. Please give details of your PhD proposal in up to 1500 words. This limit includes references or bibliography, tables, figures, table/ figure captions and footnotes. **Applications which do not follow this limit will be disqualified**. Please provide a word count at the end of the proposal. If you are including footnotes they will count towards the final word count. Be careful, too, if you are pasting tables or other illustrations as **they will also contribute to word count and may disrupt your formatting.**
	2. Please provide information on how the proposed research engages with issues relating to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Sustainability.
2. Qualifications

Please enter your relevant qualifications, awarding institution, and class or GPA awarded. This should include any relevant professional qualifications. If you are currently undertaking a programme of any kind, please indicate what this is and indicate ‘pending’ under results.

Professional/ practical experience (max 350 words)

The assessors will use this information to establish any research, practice-based, or professional experience you have gained that might contribute to the intended research topic. What makes your experience distinctive and contribute to the unique aspect of your project? Please supply the kind and extent of any experience relevant to your proposed research. If you do not have relevant information you can leave this section blank and you will not be penalised.

1. Supervision

Please state the names of your prospective supervisory team according to your offer letter. If you have not yet received the offer letter, give the names of your intended supervisors. Please note that the NWCDTP provides the opportunity for you to have a supervisory team drawn from two or more of our constituent institutions, but your main supervisor should be from the institution at which you will be registered.

1. Research training needs (max 150 words for this section)

Please give details of any identified training needs for your doctoral programme and state whether or not this has been discussed with your supervisors. Please also state whether your research project will require you to undertake research abroad or require additional resources (e.g. research/study abroad, language training, use of specialist equipment/facilities etc). The NWCDTP has resources for these purposes and an expensive project will not be disadvantaged. If you have identified training needs that require additional time on top of the normal three years, indicate this and you may be eligible to apply for a studentship extension.

1. Collaboration with External Partners (max 150 words for this section)

Please indicate whether you think there is potential to work with an external partner, e.g. a cultural organisation, an industrial partner or a government body, during your PhD. Indicate how this might take place: e.g. internship/placement or other type of collaboration. The external partner does not have to be part of the NWCDTP. Please give details of collaboration or placement you plan to develop during your PhD.

1. References and transcripts

Your application will be judged on the basis of your application form, your references, and your academic transcripts. The references and transcripts will be attached to your application by the institution through which you are applying. These must be received by the relevant admissions office by the deadline of 3rd February 2023. The references and transcripts submitted in support of your application for a place will suffice for this purpose; however updated documents may be submitted if appropriate. This is advised if your new documents are able to provide new information, for instance regarding your performance on a master’s degree currently in progress. If you are a current PhD student new reference letters should be submitted with comments on progress on your PhD to date. It is your responsibility to contact and chase up relevant references in this case. Updated documents and references will need to be submitted by you to your institution by the deadline of 3rd February 2023.

**Guidance for references:**

* Potential supervisors can be a referee – but should not be both references.
* Referees should include comment on the academic ability of the candidate or their professional or practical experience.
* Referees should discuss the candidate’s intellectual ability. They should comment on the candidate’s suitability for postgraduate training in general and for the research they propose to undertake.
* Where possible, the referees should comment on the research project in relation to the candidate, the supervisors, and the research environment.
* Referees should avoid generalisations, repetitions, and ‘lukewarm’ statements in references.
* Extracurricular activities should also be highlighted in references to show that the referee knows the candidate well.
* It may be useful to note the AHRC’s strategic priorities and how the proposed work might engage them.
* If the candidate is not from a UK institution it will be useful for the references to discuss their qualifications and underline whether they are particularly exceptional.
* Referees might wish to raise anything that might have prevented the candidate from achieving their maximum potential, if this is appropriate.
* Referees should look at the [Assessment Criteria](#Criteria) when preparing their references.
1. Acknowledgement

Please sign and date the application form.

**Equality and Diversity Form**

**Please ensure you do submit an E&D Form with your application form. Please be assured that the form will be anonymised and separated from your application form before the assessment stage process.**

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**APPENDIX 1 –LIST OF PATHWAYS**

* **Classics**
* **Creative Writing**
* **Dance, Drama and Performing Arts**
* **English**
* **Heritage**
* **History**
* **Language-Based Area Studies**
* **Law**
* **Linguistics**
* **Media and Cultural Studies**
* **Modern Languages and Translation**
* **Music**
* **Philosophy**
* **Religions and Theology**
* **Visual Arts: Arts and Design**

**APPENDIX 2**

**List of contact for each institution (General queries / Submission of funding applications)**

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**Keele University:** **all funding applications to be sent to**:

 humss.pgr@keele.ac.uk



**Lancaster University:** **all funding applications to be sent to:**

*pgradmissions@lancaster.ac.uk*

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**Manchester Metropolitan University:** **all funding applications to be sent to:**

*PGRFunding@mmu.ac.uk*

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**Royal Northern College of Music:** **all funding applications to be sent to:***pgr@rncm.ac.uk*

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**The University of Liverpool:** **all funding applications to be sent to:**

*uolnwc@liverpool.ac.uk*

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**The University of Manchester: All funding applications should be sent to:**

*HUMS.doctoralacademy.admissions@manchester.ac.uk*



**University of Salford:** **all funding applications should be sent to:**

*PGR-SupportSAM@salford.ac.uk*