

Applying for a PhD scholarship can be a challenging journey - full of doubts and questions, especially when people are unsure whom to turn to for support. When I came across the advertisement for the fellowship a year ago, I asked myself: If I could support prospective PhD students in applying for funding, what would I do? Having had the honour to become an Application Support Fellow, I realised that what I could do was to offer, collect, and visualise help and support - both from myself and other NWCDTP-funded students - as best I could.

The Buddy Scheme was designed as a part of my fellowship to fulfil these objectives. Following a 'past-present-future' structure, the Scheme aimed to offer prospective applicants insights into past application experiences, present guidance on the application process, and future opportunities within the NWCDTP community.

To do this, I created a social media account and reached out to all NWCDTP students for help in sharing their past successful application forms across various disciplines - from architecture and heritage to philosophy (a total of 14 examples). I carefully proofread each form to ensure it was ready for publication on the NWCDTP official website. Together with Pamela Forster (Application Support Fellow), I also sorted and categorised past EDI data. Meanwhile, to offer timely guidance and relate to prospective applicants, I created a reflexive video for the first applicant workshop last October, where I answered questions and shared my own experience - including my application timeline, important tips for writing a research proposal (the most important application document), and advice on contacting and following up with potential supervisors. In order to give applicants a sense of community for future opportunities NWCDTP can offer after enrolment, I applied for an additional Cohort Development Fund (CDF) and drafted a 'call-for-volunteers' to produce a promotional video that visualised the vibrant and growing NWCDTP community. Alongside this, I remotely attended the two-day AHRC Cross-DTP EDI Conference and Networking Event in February and co-wrote the event wrap-up blog. This experience really helped situate my role as an Application Support Fellow in a broader context, offering a clearer picture of both the progress and the ongoing challenges facing the EDI efforts in higher education.

Undertaking the role of Application Support Fellow has not been without difficulties. The most challenging task so far has been initiating and coordinating the NWCDTP promotional video project - particularly in drafting the call for volunteers, finding a photographer, recruiting student participants, and negotiating the filming schedule. However, with advice from Hannah Helm (the NWCDTP EDI Advocate) and Jerome De Groot (Director of the NWCDTP), and the generous support of everyone involved in the video shoot, I successfully managed to find the photographer and student participants to deliver a high-quality promotional video for the NWCDTP. This valuable experience has significantly strengthened my problem-solving and leadership skills.

Looking back on my one-year experience as the Application Support Fellow, I am proud of what I've been able to offer and sincerely grateful for the generous support from the

NWCDTP team and all the student volunteers who contributed to this journey along the way. I hope that my efforts have made the application journey less daunting than it seems, and that I have, in some meaningful way, responded to the question I posed at the beginning by offering diverse forms of support for prospective applicants in pursuing their doctoral research in the NWCDTP community.