

Demystifying the PhD: Introduction to the Doctoral Landscape Awards

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Welcome

To the University of Southampton



The University of Southampton

- **The University of Southampton has over 150 years of history**
- **Is a founding member of the Russell Group & is consistently placed in the top 100 universities in the world**
- **92 per cent of our research output was assessed in the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021) as being world-leading and internationally excellent**
- **Innovative thinking and pioneering research are at the heart of our culture; our people are finding solutions for some of the biggest challenges that our planet is facing, pursuing environmental sustainability, and making a difference to the world**

An aerial view of the University of Southampton campus, showing a large green lawn, several buildings, and a paved walkway. The image is dimmed to serve as a background for the text.

At the University of Southampton, we believe in changing the world for the better. We stand for exploration and curiosity, interdisciplinary thinking, inventive education and cutting-edge facilities to catalyse change.

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

- The University of Southampton's Faculty of Arts and Humanities offers PhD opportunities in subjects including Archaeology, English, Film, History, Music, Philosophy, and Art, Design, and Fashion and Textiles.
- Humanities: We're passionate about investigating what makes us human, from literature, language and music, to archaeology, history, film and philosophy.
- WSA: We're one of the UK's leading centres for art and design research, education and knowledge exchange. We're committed to environmental sustainability, social engagement, internationalism and leading practice at the intersection of art, science, technology and culture.
- See: [Our faculties, schools and departments | University of Southampton](#)

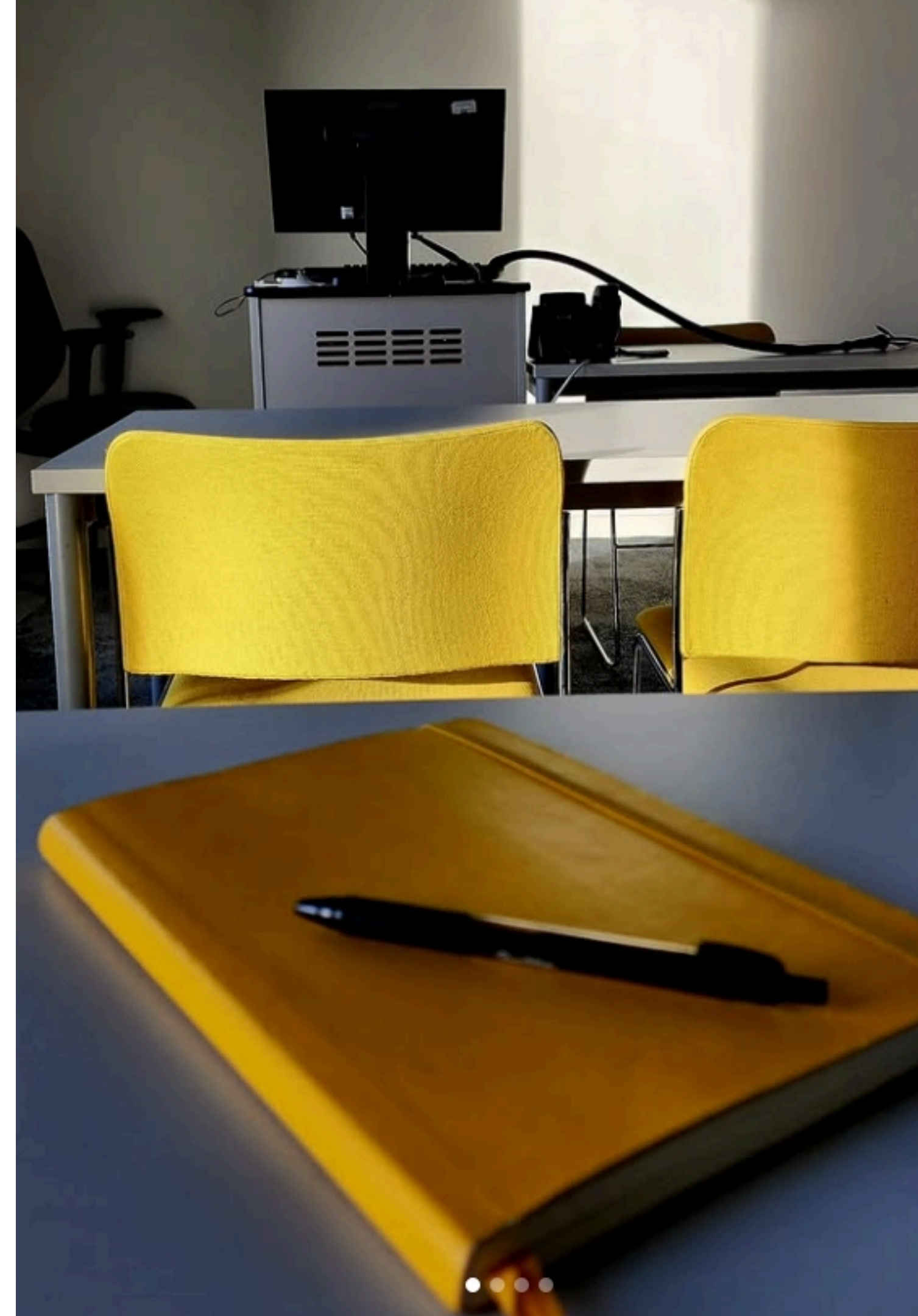


What is a PhD?

A PhD is a doctoral research degree and the highest level of academic qualification you can achieve. A PhD involves students taking on independent and significant research culminating in a publish-worthy thesis. The degree normally takes between three and four years of full-time work towards an original contribution to your subject. [Explained: What is a PhD Degree? - Your Ultimate Guide](#)

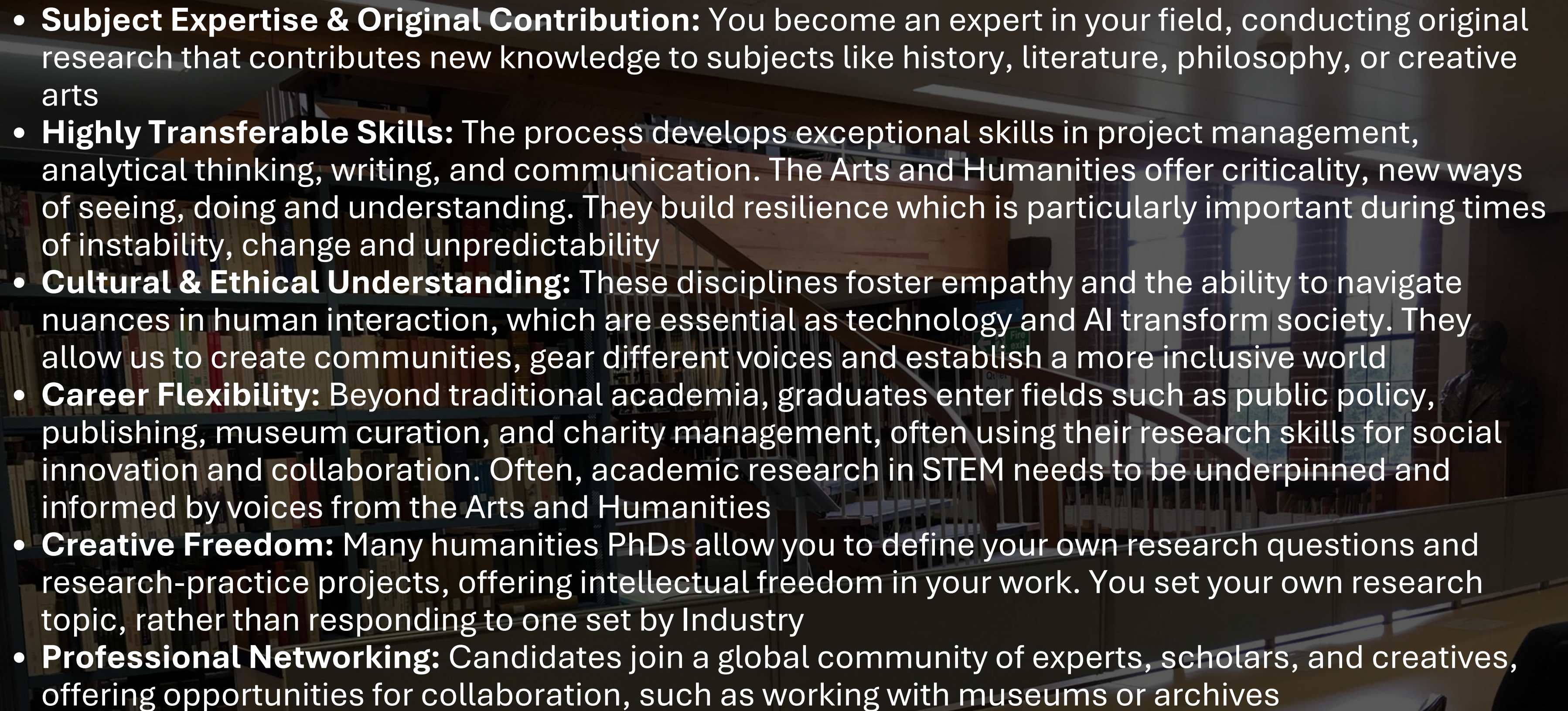
It involves the following:

- A literature review
- Undertaking new research that will contribute to the field in which you are working
- Writing your findings in a thesis
- This is basically what you will be doing in years 1-3.
- But there will be more, e.g. a placement in industry, a museum, archive, fieldwork, or practice led work, etc
- You will then sit a Viva (oral exam) in which you will 'defend' your thesis





Why study a PhD?

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- The background of the image shows a library or study area. On the left, there are tall bookshelves filled with books. In the center, a wooden staircase with a white railing leads to an upper level. In the foreground, there are several long, light-colored wooden study tables with black chairs tucked under them. The lighting is soft and even, creating a quiet, academic atmosphere.
- **Subject Expertise & Original Contribution:** You become an expert in your field, conducting original research that contributes new knowledge to subjects like history, literature, philosophy, or creative arts
 - **Highly Transferable Skills:** The process develops exceptional skills in project management, analytical thinking, writing, and communication. The Arts and Humanities offer criticality, new ways of seeing, doing and understanding. They build resilience which is particularly important during times of instability, change and unpredictability
 - **Cultural & Ethical Understanding:** These disciplines foster empathy and the ability to navigate nuances in human interaction, which are essential as technology and AI transform society. They allow us to create communities, gear different voices and establish a more inclusive world
 - **Career Flexibility:** Beyond traditional academia, graduates enter fields such as public policy, publishing, museum curation, and charity management, often using their research skills for social innovation and collaboration. Often, academic research in STEM needs to be underpinned and informed by voices from the Arts and Humanities
 - **Creative Freedom:** Many humanities PhDs allow you to define your own research questions and research-practice projects, offering intellectual freedom in your work. You set your own research topic, rather than responding to one set by Industry
 - **Professional Networking:** Candidates join a global community of experts, scholars, and creatives, offering opportunities for collaboration, such as working with museums or archives

What do you need to do?

- **Research Proposal** All applications require a research proposal, this can be uploaded with your application or you can email your proposal to fah-pgr-apply@southampton.ac.uk. You must send a copy as part of your online application even if you also send one to an academic. If we do not receive your research proposal your application will be held in the pending file for 30 days before being withdrawn from the application process. Below are guidelines of what we expect from a research proposal.
- **Sample of Work/Art Portfolio** Disciplines may require samples of work or an art portfolio as part of the application. Work samples should normally comprise an essay of approx. 2500 words, or a longer piece of work with a section of 2500 words marked for particular consideration. The work should be appropriate to the subject area in which you intend to study.

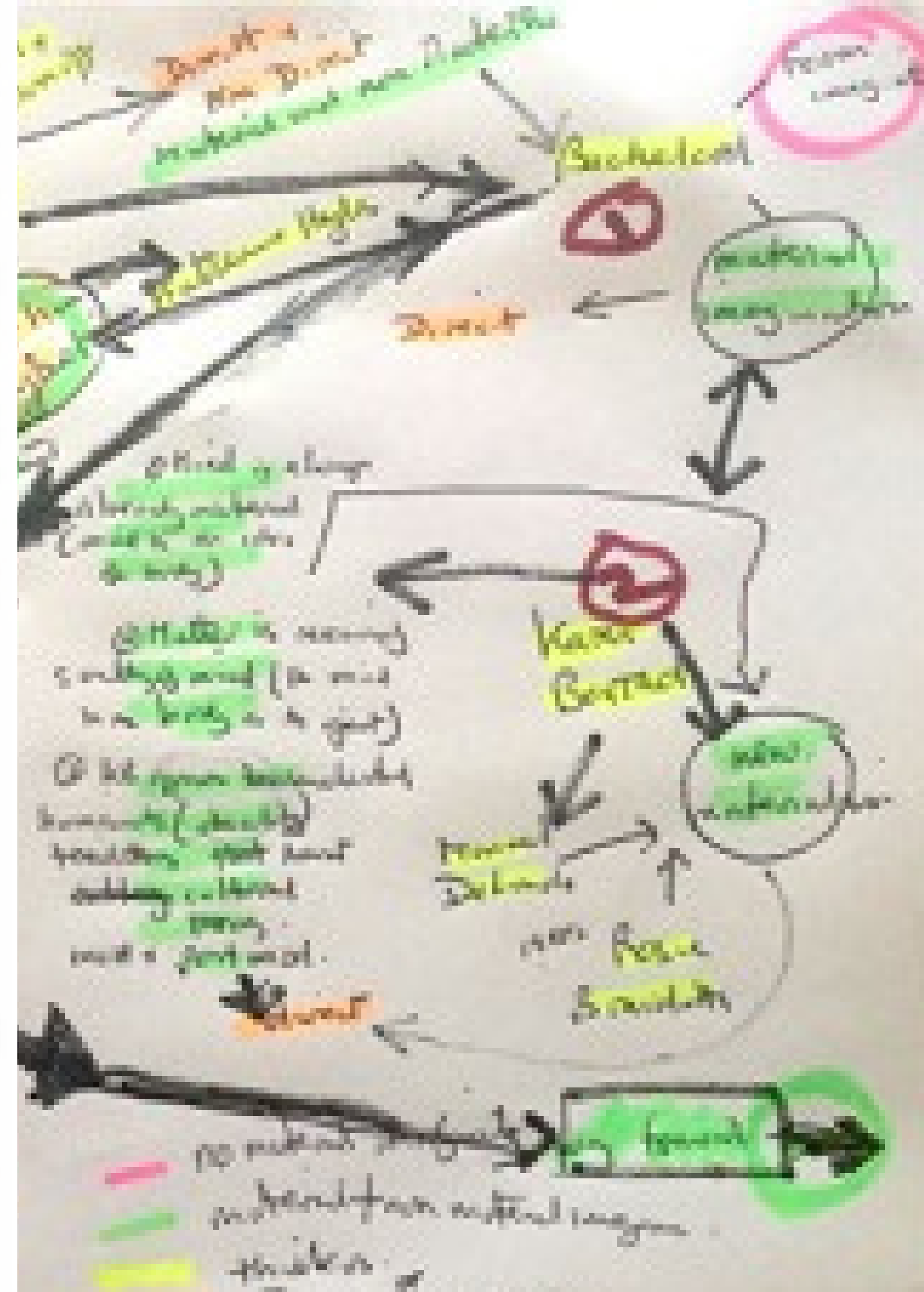
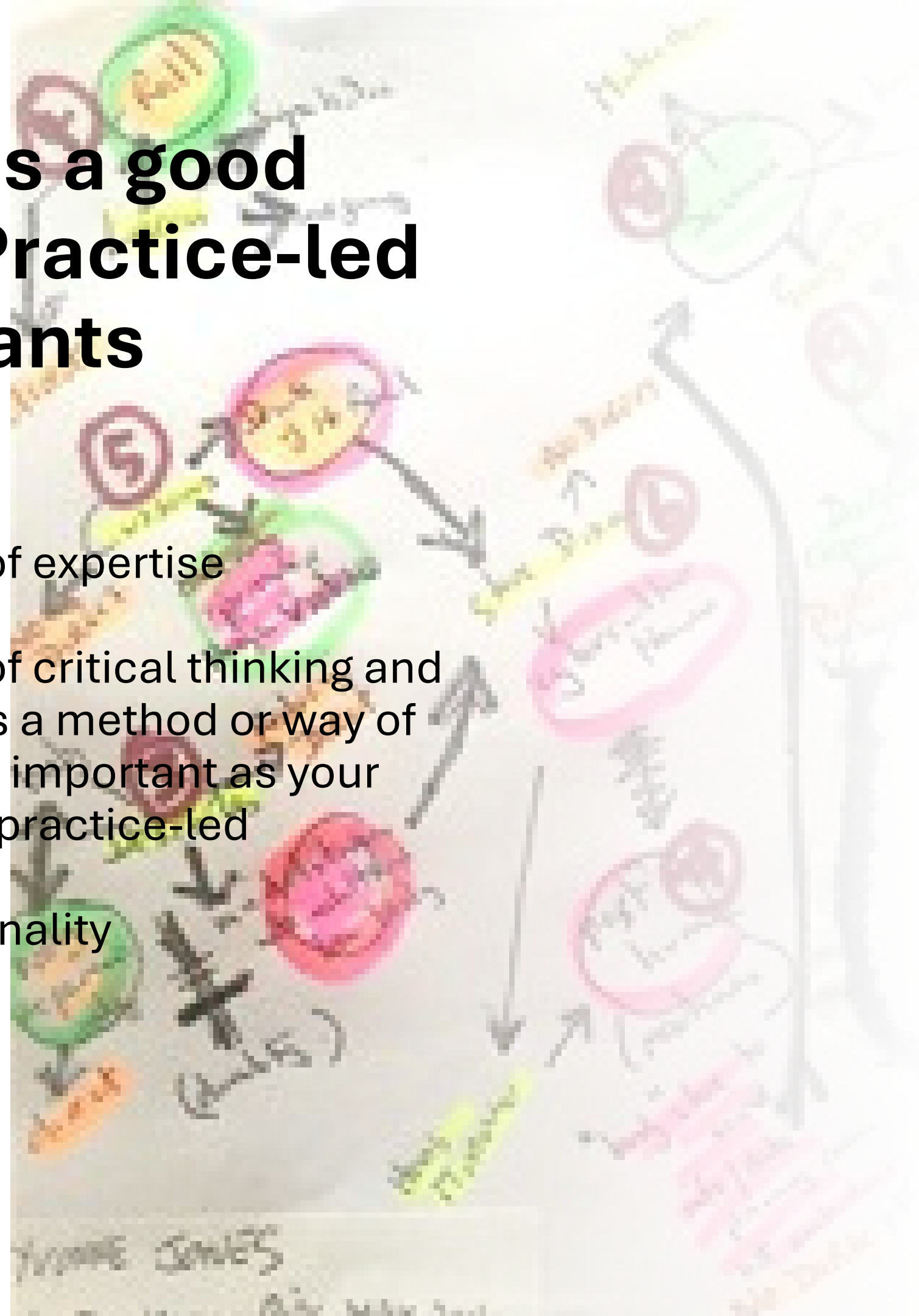


What makes a good research proposal?

- Originality
- Contribution to the field or fields in which you are working - why is this research important?
- Clear research question/s
- Outline of what, why and how you are going to research
- Your expertise and understanding of the key issues or background in the field
- Your positionality in relation to the discussion
- Timeframe (is this achievable in the time available)
- And: does your research fit in with that of the department, and is there a potential supervisory team that could support your studies (look this up on the UoS or departmental website)
- See: [Research Proposal | PhD | University of Southampton](#)

What makes a good portfolio? Practice-led Arts applicants

- Demonstration of expertise
- Demonstration of critical thinking and using practice as a method or way of exploring. This is important as your research will be practice-led
- Evidence of originality



Key considerations

Is your research proposal...

- Original
- Manageable and doable

Does your research proposal...

- Make a contribution to the field
- Have a clear line of questioning
- Demonstrate your expertise and position
- Align with the research in the department / supervisors you are applying to



AHRC Doctoral Landscape Awards

- See: [Funded doctoral training programmes | University of Southampton](#) and [AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award \(DLA\)](#).
- The benefits of choosing a doctoral training programme usually include:
 - funding for fees and an allowance for living costs, plus a grant for research activities
 - expert supervision and support to help you navigate your PhD
 - academic and practical training embedded throughout
 - industry internships or placements – great for professional skills and networking
 - part-time options so you can fit your research into your life
 - an inclusive community of researchers from all walks of life, with plenty of opportunities to connect and share ideas



- The University of Southampton is delighted to offer three Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded PhD studentships as part of its new Doctoral Landscape Award. These studentships are available across our Arts and Humanities PhD programmes commencing in September 2026.
- Applicants should apply for study at the University of Southampton with their research proposal to their preferred PhD programme/department using the standard application form [PhD Application | Research | University of Southampton](#) by **26th March 2026**.
- In order to be considered for the studentship, applicants must also complete the following additional form [2026/27 AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award - additional application information – Fill in form](#) by **26th March 2026**.
- Details of what you need to do to make an application for PhD study, and how you can apply, can be found here [PhD Application | Research | University of Southampton](#). Additional support can be obtained directly from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at fah-pgr-apply@soton.ac.uk.



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

As an AHRC DLA postgraduate researcher you will:

- Conduct an independent research project achievable in 3.5 years in any aspect of Arts and Humanities offered within the Faculty
- Undertake a funded 3-month placement project which can be completed flexibly (part-time or in several blocks)
- Receive a scholarship for up to 3.75 years to complete your PhD (including the placement)
- Join a regional hub providing innovative training and development opportunities
- Scholarships cover UK tuition fees, a stipend at UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) rates (currently £20,780 per year) plus research and training costs to help support with conference attendance, participant costs, overseas fieldwork. The scholarship does not cover relocation, Visa or NHS surcharge costs.



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

Eligibility

AHRC Doctoral Landscape Awards are open to international students (EU and non-EU students who do not have residency), however the AHRC will only cover the UK (Home) fee rate, therefore the difference between the UK and International fee rate will need to be met from other sources.



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

To be eligible for an AHRC Doctoral Landscape Award, a candidate must:

- Have applied for a place on a PhD programme at the University of Southampton in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities;
- All eligible applicants offered a place at the University of Southampton will be submitted to the Landscape Award for consideration,
- Expect to begin their PhD studies in Autumn 2026
- Have an outstanding academic record, or equivalent experience of working at an outstanding level in a relevant field
- Be resident within the UK for the duration of their studies and live within a reasonable distance to the University of Southampton.



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

- Successful candidates may undertake their study full-time or part-time. No distinction is made during the selection process. Part-time students will have the same amount of funding, but this will be spread across 7.25 years (7 years for the PhD project and a 3 month placement).
- We welcome applications from candidates considering both full-time and part-time modes of study and **encourage a diversity of applicants including post first-degree entrants, returners to study and those with non-traditional academic backgrounds.**



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

How to Apply

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- Please describe what motivated you to do a PhD.
- What excites you about your PhD topic?
- Please describe your skill and background that are relevant to the PhD you are applying for.
- Please describe how your PhD will support your future goals/career aspirations.



DEADLINE

The deadline for academic applications and the AHRC DLA additional application form is Thursday 26th March 2026.



Any Questions

Additional links

- [Find Your PhD | Research | University of Southampton](#)
- [PhD Application | Research | University of Southampton](#)
- fah-pgr-apply@southampton.ac.uk

