

STUDENT-LED STUDENTSHIP APPLICATION: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR OCTOBER 2023 ENTRY

Please read these guidance notes before submitting your SeNSS application and, in particular, note the following:

1. You do **not** need to have a Masters degree to apply for a +3 PhD. If you have equivalent professional experience or an undergraduate degree plus relevant professional experience, you may be eligible for an award. ***Please do the following two things to determine the right structure of studies for you before starting your application on the online application platform:***
 - a) Use the SeNSS research methods training compliance calculator, available [here](#). This will immediately advise you on which structure to apply for. Please download a copy of the information you provided and the outcome the calculator has given and -
 - b) Share this with your supervisor as soon as possible, so that your supervisor is aware of the advice you have been given. However, please note that the ***calculator is for guidance only***. The final decision will still lie with SeNSS, and you and our supervisors should talk directly to SeNSS if you feel that the advice generated by the calculator is not appropriate.
2. All studentships are offered on a **full- or part-time** basis, and on a **three-year to four-year basis**.
3. **All studentships are fully-funded, regardless of your residential eligibility status.** That is, your tuition fees will be paid for the duration of your funded studentship (you will not have to pay any tuition fees for the duration of your funded award), and you will receive a stipend (salary) for the same period.
4. There are **three stages to making a SeNSS application:**
 - a) Apply to your chosen university for a postgraduate place;
 - b) Discuss your application with your supervisor and, if they are supportive, then;
 - c) Apply for a SeNSS studentship.
5. **Check with your chosen university you are applying to for the deadline for applying for a post-graduate place, as these deadlines fall earlier in the year than the SeNSS deadline.** We strongly advise you to apply several weeks before this to allow sufficient time to complete the four stages above.

Once you have applied to your university, you must apply for SeNSS funding. The deadline for submitting your SeNSS application is **12.00 GMT on Friday 20 January 2023**.

6. SeNSS is holding **three webinars** for prospective students, to support you in crafting the best application possible. These will be held via Zoom on:
 - Wednesday 9 November 2022: 12.00-14.00 GMT (<https://essex-university.zoom.us/j/98539616224>)
 - Tuesday 22 November 2022: 19.00-21.00 GMT (<https://essex-university.zoom.us/j/95313358823>)
 - Saturday 17 December 2022 (Q&A): 10.00-11.00 GMT (<https://essex-university.zoom.us/j/99812058711>)
7. To submit an application, you **must**:
 - Discuss this with your proposed supervisor, who will be required to complete a statement of support for your application;
 - Read the selection criteria on p.18, as your application will be judged according to these criteria; and,
 - Complete the online application via HEIapply. Print outs and other forms of the application will not be accepted.
8. You are only permitted to submit ONE application for a **student-led studentship** beginning in 2023. However, there is **no limit** on the number of **collaborative studentship applications** you can make, provided you are eligible for each of these. For further information, click [here](#). You may also be eligible for an ARIES-SeNSS (NERC-ESCR) funded studentship. For further information, click [here](#).
9. Please note that your university will ask you to attend an **interview** (virtual or face-to-face) in respect of your application for a PhD place, and/or your application for a SeNSS studentship.

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USING HEIAPPLY

- The links for each studentship competition are available via the SeNSS website. Please click [here](#) to go to our website.

SECTION 1: HEIAPPLY DASHBOARD

- The Dashboard is where you will land when signing in to HEIapply, after creating an account. It will show your application ID, as well as the status of your application (e.g. what percentage of the application process you have completed).
- Click on the “**Application Tracker**” to see where your application currently is in the SeNSS competition process.
- To work on your application, click on “**View Application**”.
- About halfway down the Dashboard page, you will see the heading “**Tasks**”: this is where you will find the **Equal Opportunities form**, which you must complete to be able to submit your application (for further information about this form, see p.29).
- Near the bottom of the Dashboard page, you will see the “**Communication Inbox**”:
 - If SeNSS sends you any messages, these will show up here.
 - If you would like to send us a message with a query, please click on “Student Led” (see the screenshot below), type in your message, and click on “Send”. We’ll respond as soon as possible.

Communication Inbox

Send and receive communication from our administration team below. To respond to a message or ask a question, simply select the application you want to communicate in relation to, and type your message.

The screenshot shows a web interface for the Communication Inbox. At the top, it says "View messages relating to". Below this are two filter buttons: "All" and "Student Led", with "Student Led" highlighted in yellow. Underneath the filters is a large text input area for writing a message. To the right of the input area is a grey "Send" button. At the bottom left of the interface, there are labels "Read?" and "Message".

THE ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS

The online application process consists of completing the following tasks:

- The application form; and,
- The equal opportunities form.
 - Because applicants can apply for different studentship structures (e.g. +3, a 1+3, a 2+2 or a +4 etc.), these guidance notes indicate which questions must be answered by **all students**, and which questions are **specific to particular structures**. Where this occurs, we indicate this with **highlighted text**. Please follow the guidance for the specific structure you are applying for.
- You will also be asked to upload some documents to support your application once you have completed writing your application.

If you plan to apply for both a student-led and a collaborative studentship, you can do so by clicking on the grey box in the top right-hand corner “**Apply for another competition**”.

SECTION 2: GUIDANCE NOTES STUDENT PHASE APPLICATION

These Guidance Notes are available to you in section 2 of the HEapply portal. You can return to these at any time, or download them from the [SeNSS website](#), to ensure you are providing the information essential to your application.

These notes tell you what questions you will be required to answer in your application form in the order in which they appear on that form. Each question (where appropriate) is followed by some guidance on how best to answer that question.

PLEASE READ THESE NOTES, AS THEY WILL SUPPORT YOU IN WRITING AN EXCELLENT APPLICATION. YOU MUST ALSO CONSULT YOUR PROPOSED PRIMARY SUPERVISOR IN DRAFTING YOUR APPLICATION.

SECTION 3: STUDENTSHIP PATH

Studentship structure (required)

This section applies to all applicants

Question: You will be asked to apply for a specific structure/route of studentship.

Notes

SeNSS offers the following studentship structures/routes:

- **+3 studentship:** this consists of a three-year PhD;
- **1+3 studentship:** this comprises a one-year Masters degree followed by a three-year PhD.;
- **2+2 studentship:** this consists of a longer Masters programme followed by a shorter PhD programme; and,
- **+4 studentship:** this comprises both core and advanced training within the PhD programme itself.

For detailed advice on which structure/route of studies you should apply for, please click [here](#). We also encourage you to make use of the research methods training compliance calculator that SeNSS has created, which is available [here](#). This calculator aims to guide you and your supervisors in identifying – **before starting your application** – which studentship structure you should be applying for. Completing the form will result in you immediately being advised which structure is recommended for them. Please download a copy of the form and your results, and to share this with your supervisor as soon as possible. However, **please note that the calculator is for guidance only**. The final decision will still lie with SeNSS, and you and your supervisors are encouraged contact SeNSS (manager@senss-dtp.ac.uk) directly if the detailed advice note and/or the compliance calculator give rise to any questions or concerns.

All Pathways offer 1+3 and +3 studentships, but not all Pathways offer 2+2 and/or +4 studentships. Please refer to the list of SeNSS compliant PhDs for further information (available [here](#)).

If you are applying for a +3 studentship, you will see a text block pop up: this is to let you know that the ESRC requires all +3 applicants to have already completed certain research methods training skills before they start their PhD.

- You may apply for a studentship **even if you have already begun your PhD**, provided that, at the start of your award in October 2023, you have **at least 50% of your period of study remaining** (excluding your 'writing up' period).
- However, **you may only apply for funding for the remaining period of your studies if:**
 - You are already studying at one of the SeNSS universities, and
 - Your current research project falls into one of the 13 SeNSS Pathways, and
 - The 2+2 or +4 you are currently studying for is compliant with ESRC training outcomes. To find out whether the 2+2 or +4 PhD you want to take is compliant, please click [here](#).
- If you are applying for a studentship and you have started your PhD, **please apply for the structure of studentship you are already on.**
 - For example, if you have already started your +3, please select the "+3" structure of studentship in your application form.
- If it appears you will need an additional term or two's funding to complete the required compliance training (in other words, you will need a +3.25 or a +3.5), please select the **" +3 " structure of studentship** in your application form.

Your SeNSS home university and Pathway (required)

This question applies to all applicants.

Question: You will be asked to identify the [SeNSS university](#) at which you propose to study - this will become your “home” university. You are only permitted to make **one application in the student-led competition to one SeNSS university.**

Notes on identifying your Pathway

- Please identify the Pathway your research topic falls under. A full list of the 13 Pathways SeNSS offers is available [here](#).
- Please note that SeNSS universities do not offer all 13 Pathways, so make sure that the university you wish to attend offers the Pathway you want to study with. **If your proposal does not come within one of these 13 Pathways, you will not be eligible for funding.**
- However, SeNSS strongly encourages applications which are **inter- or multi-disciplinary**, so please identify any other disciplines which are covered by your topic when you set out your research proposal later in your application form. If your application is inter- or multi-disciplinary, the Pathway you should select here should be the discipline your research aligns best with.

Identifying and contacting your proposed primary supervisor (required)

This question applies to all applicants.

Question: You will be asked if you have already identified and contacted your proposed primary supervisor.

Notes

- If you have already identified and been in direct contact with your proposed supervisor, answer “**Yes**”. *Click on “Save and continue” to go to the Section 2 of the application form.*
- If you answer “**No**”, we would like to support you in identifying and contacting an academic who will be your supervisor.
 - The best way of doing this is to contact the [SeNSS Administrative Lead](#) at the university at which you plan to study. They are ready to help you in this process.
 - When emailing them, please tell them who you are, what Pathway (discipline) you want to study, and – briefly – what your proposed research topic is. This will help them to refer you to the best person to talk to about your application.

- **Please do not proceed with your application until you have identified your proposed primary supervisor.**

SECTION 4: PERSONAL DETAILS

This question applies to all applicants.

Question: You will be asked to:

- Provide your home address;
- State whether you would like to study full- or part-time; and,
- Confirm your residential status.

Notes

Home address (required)

- Please provide your home address at the point of application. That is, the address at which you are ordinarily resident during most of the year.

Mode of study (required)

- SeNSS offers both full-time (usually 37.5 hours per week) and part-time study (usually 18 hours per week, but some universities may allow you to study more than 18 hours part-time).
- For example, if you are planning to study for a +3 PhD, if you study full-time, you will study for 3 years, followed by an unpaid write-up year (if needed); if you study part-time, you will study for 6 years, followed by two unpaid write-up years (if needed).
- You can, however, **change your mode of study** once during your studentship, if you meet certain conditions.

Residential eligibility rules (required)

- Everyone is eligible to apply for these **fully-funded studentships**, regardless of where they live, or their nationality/citizenship.
- However, SeNSS is **limited by the ESRC** to awarding approximately 10-12 studentships to international applicants each year, which amounts to 30% of the total number of studentship awards we make. For further information from the ESRC on residential eligibility, please click [here](#).
- Nevertheless, you must check your residential status, as you will need to indicate in your application whether you are a **home** or an **international** applicant.
- To be a **home** student, 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 any of the criteria above, you are classed as an **international student**.

- If you have any questions about your residential status, please contact your chosen university's [SeNSS Administration Lead](#).
- A **SeNSS ESRC-funded studentship award** includes the following for the duration of your funded award:
 - Your university tuition fees: these will be paid by SeNSS to your home university. You will **not** be required to pay tuition fees during your funded award;
 - A tax-free maintenance stipend to pay your living costs: this is currently set at £17,668 per year for the 2022-23 academic year. For those studying at universities based in London, there is an additional £2,000 per year paid as London Weighting, given that the cost of living is seen as being higher for those living in London. If you are not studying at a London-based University, but still choose to live in London, you will not receive the London Weighting payment;
 - You will also be eligible to apply for other funding, including:
 - Research training support grant funds of up to £750 per year; and,
 - Funding for overseas fieldwork, overseas institutional visits, language training, and placements/internships etc.
- Please note that you **cannot hold a SeNSS studentship and another scholarship at the same time**, except in exceptional circumstances. If you have been, or think you will be, offered another scholarship, please immediately contact your [SeNSS Administrative Lead](#) for advice.

Click 'Save and Continue' to move to the next section of the application form.

SECTION 5: SUPERVISOR DETAILS (required)

This section applies to all applicants.

Question: You will be asked to provide the details of your proposed primary and second supervisor.

Notes

- All SeNSS-funded students must have **two academic supervisors**.
- You must already have identified your proposed primary supervisor and have been in contact with them to discuss your application.
- If you haven't yet identified your proposed primary supervisor, we have produced some advice which may help you find one – click [here](#) to read this advice.
- **If you are struggling to find a supervisor, please email your [SeNSS Administrative Lead](#), who will be your initial contact in helping you to**

identify someone. They will do so by providing you with the name and email address of an academic who you will then need to contact yourself.

- Your proposed primary supervisor must be based at your chosen SeNSS university, and you must consult this supervisor before completing this application form.
 - You should discuss the issue of who your second supervisor should be with your primary supervisor, as they are best placed to know who would add the most value to your research project and your supervisory team.
 - Your second supervisor can also be based at your chosen university but could be based at another SeNSS university. However, both supervisors must be based at SeNSS universities.
- To provide the details of your supervisory team, first select “**Primary Supervisor (Student Led only)**” in the “Select Type” dropdown menu, and type in the details of your primary supervisor. When you’ve done that, click on “**Save**”.
- Then, in the “Select Type” dropdown menu, select “**Secondary Supervisor (Student Led only)**”, and type in their details. When you’ve done that, click on “**Save**”.
- Scroll to the bottom of this webpage, where you will see a blue box in which you should see the details of both your primary and second supervisor.
 - If the details for both supervisors do not show, please re-enter these in the form above, and ensure you click “Save” when done.
 - Completing this form triggers an email to be sent to your proposed primary supervisor, asking them to complete a statement in support of your application. Your application for a studentship will not be accepted if your supervisor does not submit a supporting statement.
- Please contact your supervisor to let them know that they will be getting an email requesting a statement. Sometimes these emails may get labelled as spam and placed in their spam/junk folder, so please ask them to check these folders if they don't see this email.

Click ‘Save and Continue’ to move to the next section of the application form.

SECTION 6: STUDENTSHIP DETAILS

Depending on which length of studentship you are applying for, you will see different questions in this section. Guidance for each type of studentship is set out below, so look for the guidance for the one you have applied for, which appear in the following order:

- 1+3 studentships
- +3 studentships
- 2+2 and +4 studentships

Declaration regarding studentship structure (required)

This question applies to all applicants.

Please ensure you’ve read our guidance on p. 6 of these notes before answering this question.

Question: You will be asked to confirm that, although you are applying for a particular studentship structure (which you will have done under “Section 3 – Studentship Path”), you may be offered a studentship with a different structure.

Notes

- If SeNSS determines that you have not already met the majority of the ESRC’s core research methods training requirements, you may be offered a different award structure from the one for which you applied.
- The decision regarding which structure of studentship you may be offered will be based on evidence provided in the past research methods training section of this application form (see the questions under “Your past research methods training”, below).

1+3 studentship

This guidance only applies to those applying for a 1+3.

The SeNSS compliant Masters you plan to study for (required)

Question: You will be asked to provide the reference number of the SeNSS compliant Masters programme, as well as its full name.

Notes

- You may **only** apply for a Masters judged by SeNSS to be compliant with ESRC training outcomes, **and** offered by your chosen university.
- In order to find out whether the Masters you want to take is compliant, please click [here](#).
 - When clicking on that link, you will see a list of all the Masters degrees at all ten SeNSS universities which have been judged compliant. Please provide the SeNSS reference number for your intended Masters degree, which appears in the first column of the table, e.g. “m001”.
- Please ensure that you enter the Masters programme name exactly as contained in the table, as there are many degrees with similar names. The name you must enter is the name in the second column e.g. “MRes Social Science Research Methods”.

Studying for a Masters degree at a different university to which you plan to study for your PhD (required)

Question: You will be asked if you plan to complete both your Masters and PhD at the same university.

Notes

- You are expected to complete your Masters and PhD at the **same university**.
- Only in **exceptional circumstances** will you be permitted to study for these at different SeNSS universities. If you need to split your studies between two universities, please explain the exceptional circumstances that necessitate this split.
- If you plan to study for your Masters at a different SeNSS university, you will need to discuss this very early on with both your proposed supervisor and your chosen university's [SeNSS Administrative Lead](#) which, in this case, will be the supervisor and the lead at the university at which you plan to study at for your +3. Additional time will be required to organise this split between institutions, assuming it is possible.

You will next be asked if you are making any concurrent funding applications

+3 studentship

This guidance only applies to those applying for a +3.

Question: You will be asked whether you have already started your PhD.

Notes

- If you answer "**No**", *you will next be asked if you are making any concurrent funding applications.*
- If you have already started your PhD, please answer "**Yes**", and provide the date on which you started it.
- You may apply for a studentship **even if you have already begun your PhD**, provided that, at the start of your award in October 2023, you have **at least 50% of your period of study remaining** (excluding your 'writing up' period).
- For example, if you have been registered for your +3 PhD for one year of a full-time PhD at the point at which the studentship would commence, you would be eligible to apply for two years of funding. If you have already been registered for two years at this point, you are not eligible for SeNSS funding.

- If your application is successful, you will receive funding for the remainder of your studies. However, **you may only apply for funding for the remaining period of your studies if you are already studying at one of the SeNSS universities, and your current research project falls into one of the 13 SeNSS Pathways offered by that university.**

You will next be asked if you are making any concurrent funding applications.

2+2 studentships and +4 studentships

This guidance only applies to those applying for a 2+2 or a +4

Question: You will be asked whether you have already started your PhD.

Notes

- If you answer “**No**”, you will next be asked about the SeNSS compliant degree you plan to study for.
- If you have **already started your PhD**, please answer “**Yes**”, and provide the date on which you started it.
- You may apply for a studentship **even if you have already begun your PhD**, provided that, at the start of your award in October 2022, you have **at least 50% of your period of study remaining** (excluding your ‘writing up’ period).
- For example, if you have been registered for your 2+2 or +4 PhD for one year of a full-time PhD at the point at which the studentship would commence, you would be eligible to apply for three years of funding. If you have already been registered for more than two years at this point, you are not eligible for SeNSS funding.
- If your application is successful, you will receive funding for the remainder of your studies. However, **you may only apply for funding for the remaining period of your studies if:**
 - You are already studying at one of the SeNSS universities, and
 - Your current research project falls into one of the 13 SeNSS Pathways offered by that university, and
 - The 2+2 or +4 you are currently studying for is compliant with ESRC training outcomes. To find out whether the 2+2 or +4 PhD you are currently studying for is compliant, please click [here](#).

You will next be asked if you are making any concurrent funding applications.

Concurrent funding applications

This question applies to all applicants.

Question: You will be asked if you are making a separate application for any other funded studentships.

Notes

- Please indicate whether you are also applying for any other funded studentship at any other university or any other studentship funded by UKRI (the umbrella body for all UK Research Councils, including the ESRC).
- Please note: this is for information only, and **will not prejudice your application to SeNSS in any way.**

You will next be asked about your research proposal.

Research Proposal

This guidance applies to all applicants.

- You **must** discuss your research proposal with your primary supervisor before submitting your application form.
- However, it is your responsibility to write your own research proposal, that is, it must not be written by anyone else, such as your supervisor. Past experience shows that it can be easy to detect a proposal that has been written, or even partly written, by a supervisor rather than the applicant. If this appears to be the case, your proposal may receive a lower score, or may be excluded from the competition altogether.
- You should approach your proposal as an opportunity to show that you have begun to explore an important area of study, and that your research has the potential to challenge and develop that area.
- It is also important to demonstrate that you can **express your ideas in clear and precise English**, in such a way that someone who is an academic, but not a specialist in your subject area, can understand.

Question: You will be asked if your research project uses advanced quantitative methods (AQM).

This guidance applies to all applicants.

Notes

- If you answer “**Yes**”, please explain how you use AQM in your research proposal.
- If you are not sure whether the quantitative methods you plan to use in your project qualify as “advanced” in your disciplinary field, please talk to your proposed primary supervisor for guidance.

- SeNSS offers one AQM-badged studentship each year.
- To be eligible for this studentship, you must show that your project meets at least **one** of the following three ESRC criteria:

Evidence that your research proposal is AQM-based: you must describe the relevance of particular AQMs to the main research questions presented in the proposal and demonstrate how AQMs are vital to exploring your research question. This should include information about the kind of quantitative methodology and analysis that you intend to focus on, your current level of proficiency in core and advanced quantitative methods, and how your advanced skills are intended to be developed through training, and then used to address problems in new or innovative ways.

Evidence that the use of large data sets is central to your research proposal: you must describe the existing data sets that you intend to use in your research, including at least one ESRC-funded data resource or infrastructure (these are outlined in the [AQM-Steered Studentship guidance document](#)). You must explain why these datasets are the best ones available to address your research questions / hypotheses. This should include some reference to whether or how far your proposed research will build on existing analyses using such data sets, and the capacity of your work to use under-exploited data sets. As appropriate, evidence of your past experience of using large datasets, or a training plan to equip you with the relevant technical skills, should be outlined.

Evidence that big data and associated data analysis skills are central to your research proposal: you must explain why big data approaches are particularly suited to the research questions / hypotheses you have listed in your proposal and why and how these approaches enhance and/or are complementary to more traditional sources of data. You must describe your current proficiency in core and advanced data skills, and how your advanced skills are intended to be developed through training to support this project. If you plan to develop new and/or enhanced methods of analysis for such data, you must describe how you will do this, and what the impact of these new or enhanced methods will be.

Question: You will be asked to provide your research proposal title.

This guidance applies to all applicants.

Notes

- State the title of your proposed research project (or your current PhD title, if you have already begun your studies).
- Your title must be no more than **150 characters, including spaces between words, and punctuation.**

Question: You will be asked to provide an abstract, or summary, of your research proposal.

This guidance applies to all applicants

Notes

- **This is limited to a maximum of 4,000 characters, including spaces between words, and punctuation.**
- **Tip:** we suggest that you draft your answers for this section using Word (or equivalent) which can count characters and then cut and paste it into the application form, to ensure you stick to the character limit.
- Your abstract should be a complete but concise description of your research proposal, written in such a way that a non-specialist reader will quickly be able to ascertain the purpose of your research project. The SeNSS reviewers assessing your application may not be experts in your disciplinary area, and need to be able to understand what you will be researching.

Question: You will be asked to confirm that you are content for your full research abstract to be made public.

This guidance applies to all applicants

Notes

- If you are awarded a studentship, your full research abstract will be made public by the ESRC via UKRI's Gateway to Research. This is a condition of all studentship awards.
- If you are not happy for the version you have just provided to be made public (for example, if you wish to protect your intellectual property), you will be offered the opportunity to provide a second version of your abstract that you are happy to see published.

Question: You will be asked to provide a detailed research proposal.

This guidance applies to all applicants.

Notes

- **There is a strict limit of 10,000 characters (including spaces between words and punctuation)** for this section. This limit applies to all the text contained in

this text box, that is, to your proposal description, research background and questions, research methods, and schedule of work.

- This limit of 10,000 characters does not include your title, abstract or bibliography, for which different character limits apply. Please note that the application form does not accept footnotes.
- **If you exceed this limit, any additional characters will be disregarded by those assessing your application. This may mean that your application does not score as highly as it might have done.**
- **Tip:** we suggest that you draft your answers for this section using Word (or equivalent) which can count characters and then cut and paste it into the application form, to ensure you stick to the character limit.

Your proposal should follow this structure:

- Description of your research proposal (if your proposal uses advanced quantitative methods (AQM), please ensure you explain this)
- Research background and questions
- Research methods
- Proposed timeline
- Proposed impact

Consider covering the following points:

- The key areas/issues covered by the project, and the research problems or questions you intend to address and why;
 - The research context within which those problems or questions are located;
 - The particular contribution that you hope to make to the existing knowledge and understanding in this area, explaining why your research is important, and noting its relevance to, and potential impact for, non-academic beneficiaries, as appropriate;
 - The methods and critical approaches that you plan to use, and the sources for these, if appropriate;
 - If your project uses advanced quantitative methods (AQM), please explain which methods it uses, and how it uses them;
 - If relevant, how the proposed research relates to what you have studied already (where there is overlap between your Masters dissertation and your doctoral research, you should demonstrate how the project will go further, and state the added value of continuing to research in this area);
 - How the research project will develop over the period of the award (e.g. key stages, timetable); and,
 - How this research relates to your eventual career aims.
-
- If you have already begun your doctoral study, indicate the work you have undertaken to date, providing information on main pieces of work completed.

In writing your proposal, please read the selection criteria (below) by which your application will be judged.

COMPETITION SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to assess applications across all pathways and degree formats.

Evidence of the quality and feasibility of your proposal (40%)

This will be based on your outline of your proposed research project, your reasons for pursuing it, and its wider significance. It will also be based on the information supplied by your proposed primary supervisor. SeNSS assessors will be looking for evidence of the following: your ability to design and conduct a research project; a coherent and well thought-out research plan; a strong awareness of the place of the literature in your field; and the potential impact of your research on professional practice. Reference will be made to your personal statement, as contained in your application, as well as your supervisors' supporting statement.

Evidence that you are prepared for your proposed research project (40%)

This will be based on your description of how your previous experience (this includes life experience as well as academic and/or professional experience) has prepared you for postgraduate study and research. Reference will be made to your personal statement, as contained in your application, as well as your supervisor's supporting statement.

Evidence of the quality of your proposed research environment, including supervisory expertise (20%)

This will be based on your proposed supervisors' research areas, knowledge, and expertise in relation to your proposed project, the individual roles of the proposed supervisory team, your identified training needs and the plan for meeting these. Reference will be made to information provided by your proposed primary supervisor, which should reflect on expertise brought to the project by your supervisory team as a whole.

Please note that all 4-year award applications (1+3, 2+2 and +4) will be assessed in a way that recognises that applicants are likely to have had less training and fewer opportunities to develop a detailed proposed research project than an applicant for a +3 studentship.

Question: You will be asked to provide a bibliography for your research proposal.

This guidance applies to all applicants

Notes

- Please list the key texts to which you have referred in your research proposal. If there are additional important texts you wish to include, please do so.
- There is no character limit for this section, but you should only include texts which are directly relevant to your proposal.

Question: You will be asked to indicate what ethical considerations are raised by your research project, and how you plan to address these.

This guidance applies to all applicants

Notes

- Your proposed research is required to conform both to the ethical standards required by your home institution and to the [ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics](#).
- If you are unsure about whether your research gives rise to any ethical considerations, please discuss this with your proposed primary supervisor.
- If your proposed research does not give rise to any ethical considerations (this will be very rare, and your proposed primary supervisor must agree with this), then simply state this in the text box provided.

Resourcing

This section applies to all applicants.

Please note that simply stating in your application that you require additional resources does not guarantee that you will receive all the funds you have noted if your application is successful.

Question: You will be asked whether your project is able to be delivered within the Research Training Support Grant funding available (either up to £750 per year, or up to the maximum of £3,500 across the lifetime of your studentship award).

Notes

- Please read the SeNSS Research Training Support Grant guidance notes, which sets out the costs you can apply for under this fund. These are available on the HEIapply website, in “*Section 2 – Guidance Notes Student Phase application*”.
- In brief, you will be able to apply for up to £750 per year, or up to £3,500 across the lifetime of your studentship award, for costs incurred directly in support of your research (**excluding** overseas fieldwork – which is funded separately).
- If you are intending to undertake **fieldwork in the UK**, and this will cost more than £750 a year, or more than £3,500 across the lifetime of your award, please include these costs in your application.
- Aside from UK fieldwork costs, RTSG funding covers things such as interviewing participants, travel, attending conferences, accessing datasets, language lesson costs etc.
- If you will need more than £750 per year, or £3,500 across your award, you will need to set out in your application why you will need more funding, what it is for, and what it will cost.

Overseas fieldwork (OFW)

This guidance applies to all applicants.

If you state in your application that you will not need to conduct OFW but change your mind after you start your studies, it is highly unlikely that you will be permitted to apply for funding to support this, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

So, please think very carefully about whether you will need to conduct OFW for your research and discuss this with your supervisor. OFW is defined as conducting fieldwork **anywhere outside the UK**.

Question: You will be asked if you plan to undertake overseas fieldwork as part of your research project.

- If you answer “No”, *you will be asked next whether you require language training.*
- If you answer “Yes”, please read the notes below and answer the following additional questions:
 - Which country you intend to conduct your fieldwork in
 - How long you will need to spend in this country to complete your fieldwork
 - How much you estimate it will cost to undertake this fieldwork in total
 - Provide an itemised list of the main costs you are likely to incur.

Notes

- You must read the SeNSS Overseas Fieldwork policy: Guidance for students. These are available on the HEIapply website, in “*Section 2 – Guidance Notes Student Phase application*”.

- You will need to draw up a clear budget for your OFW that itemises all the standard costs you will incur (flights, visa, vaccinations etc.) with a brief justification for any further costs. Please be realistic when drawing up your fieldwork budget. That is, **please do not significantly under- or over-cost** it. Those reviewing your SeNSS application form will assess whether your research project is feasible in light of your plan and budget for conducting OFW.
- If you are awarded a SeNSS Studentship, you will still need to submit a formal, more detailed application, supported by your supervisor, for funding for OFW once you have started your studies, as this funding will not be automatically paid to you.

Language training

This guidance applies to all applicants.

If you answer “No” to this question, you will not be permitted to apply for a language training extension if you change your mind once you have started your studentship, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Question: You will be asked if you plan to undertake language training as part of your research project.

- If you answer “No”, *you will be asked next whether you have a collaborative element to your studentship.*
- If you answer “Yes”, answer the following additional question:
 - What is the length of funded extension you will apply for in order to learn this language, based on the ESRC guidance on language learning extensions?

Notes

- You **must** read the SeNSS Difficult Language Training policy: Guidance for Students before answering this question. These are available on the HEApply website, in “*Section 2 – Guidance Notes Student Phase application*”.
- It is possible to be granted an extension to your funding for up to one year if you need to acquire or develop a working ability with a language where this is **crucial** to the success of your research. If you are planning to spend extended time in the field, **you are expected to be competent in a language which is used in the area in which you will be based.**
- If you need to learn a language, you will need to check whether this language qualifies for an extension and, if so, for how long. Please refer to Annex 2 on page 41 of the [ESRC’s Postgraduate Funding Guide](#) for this information. (Please note that the ESRC refers to learning **any** language as “difficult language training”.)
- Please discuss this issue with your supervisor. You will need to consider issues such as whether you will need to develop competence in a local dialect, the level of competence you need to achieve in this language to carry out your research etc.

- Those reviewing your SeNSS application form will assess whether your research project is feasible in light of the language training you propose to undertake. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence may be required to show that you will be capable of learning the language in the time available.
- If you are awarded a SeNSS studentship, you will need to submit a more detailed application, supported by your supervisor, for an extension to your funding to learn or develop a language, as this will not be granted automatically.

Collaborative studentship information

A student-led research project with a **collaborative element** is one which is devised by the student, who identifies and approaches a non-academic partner (termed a “collaborative partner”) to work with them on their research project. **A collaborative partner is not a university, but can be a business, public or third sector organisation.** There can be more than one collaborative partner.

Collaborative partners must contribute something of value to your research project, for example, contributing financially to help cover studentship costs, providing access to their datasets, providing an additional supervisor, or providing a placement. It is not only important to demonstrate that your research project will benefit from this partner’s knowledge, skills, and resources, but also how this partner will ultimately benefit from the knowledge and outcomes generated by your research project (impact).

Question: You will be asked whether your research project, as outlined in your application, includes a collaborative element.

The first question applies to all applicants.

Notes

- If you answer “No”, *you will next be asked about your education and training.*
- If you answer “Yes”, please read the notes below and answer the additional questions.

Details of collaborative partner(s)

Question: You will be asked to provide details of your collaborative partner, including whether you are able to provide a letter of support from that partner, and whether you have a second collaborative partner.

These questions apply only to those applicants whose research project has a collaborative element.

Notes

- Please provide the following details:
 - The name of your collaborating organisation(s);
 - The name, position, and contact details of your contact in this (these) organisation(s);
 - Whether you are able to provide a letter of support from this organisation; and,
 - Whether you have a second collaborative partner to add to your application.
 - If you answer “No” to having a second partner, *you will be asked next about what contribution your collaborative partner will make to your research project.*
 - If you answer “Yes” to having a second partner, you will be asked for the same information for that partner as for the first partner.
- Please supply a letter of support from your collaborative partner(s) for your research proposal if you are able to do so. A template for a letter of support is available on the HEIapply website, in “*Section 2 – Guidance Notes Student Phase application*”.
- In brief, the letter should:
 - state why the collaborator(s) would like to partner with you in this research project, and what they hope to gain from the collaboration; and,
 - provide a brief statement about what the collaborator(s) will contribute to your project, including any financial and/or in-kind contributions (such as access to their data).
- If you are able to provide a letter, you will be asked to upload it in Section 7 – “Upload your documents”.

Question: You will be asked to state the nature and value of the contribution your collaborative partner(s) will be providing to your research project via SeNSS.

These questions apply only to those applicants whose research project has a collaborative element.

Notes

- Your collaborative partners can either contribute financially (up to 50% of the total value of the studentship), or **in-kind**.
- “In kind” means that your collaborative partner will make a **non-monetary** contribution to your studentship, for example, it may provide an external supervisor for you, allow you to access its datasets or offer you a placement.
 - If your partner is making an in-kind contribution, please estimate the financial value of this contribution.
 - If you are not sure how to do this, please talk to your proposed primary supervisor, or your collaborative partner for an estimate of the value of their contribution.

Education and Training

Details of your previous education and training

This section applies to all applicants.

Question: You will be asked to provide details of your previous education and training, including your undergraduate degree, your Masters degree (if you have one, or are currently studying for one), and your PhD (only if you have already started studying towards your PhD).

Notes

- You must complete this section even if you have used the compliance calculator and discussed the outcome with your supervisor.
- For each higher education qualification you hold, please provide the information outlined below. To assist you, examples of undergraduate and Masters degrees are provided on the application form. Please click on the “i” in the purple circle to see this example.
 - Qualification and title of award;
 - Name of university/institution studied at;
 - Name of country in which this university/institution is situated;
 - Month and year that the programme started;
 - Month and year that the programme has been/will be completed; and,
 - Degree classification (where awarded), or marks obtained for completed modules.
- If you have already started your PhD, for the “degree classification” line, please state whether, at your last supervisory board meeting (or equivalent), your progress was satisfactory or not.

Your Past Research Methods Training

This section applies to all applicants.

You will be asked a series of questions to determine which section of the application form you need to complete next.

Notes

- If you do **not hold a Masters degree**, and are not currently studying for one and you **do not have any professional experience which has provided you with any research methods training**, you will next be asked about any work experience you have that is relevant to your research project.

- If you hold a **compliant SeNSS Masters degree**, please indicate which degree you hold. *You will next be asked about any work experience you have that is relevant to your research project.*
- If you **hold a Masters degree** which is **not a SeNSS compliant Masters degree**, *you will next be asked about any research methods training you've done, or skills you have acquired through professional experience, in order to determine the structure of studies which you are best suited to.*
- If you do **not hold a Masters degree**, and are not currently studying for one, but you do **have any professional experience which has provided you with research methods training**, *you will next be asked about the research methods training you've done and/or the skills you have acquired through professional experience, in order to determine the structure of studies which you are best suited to.*

Your research methods training/skills

This section applies only to applicants who have a Masters degree which is not SeNSS compliant, and/or who have professional experience through which they have obtained research methods skills.

Question: You will be asked a series of questions to determine what research methods training and/or skills you already have.

Notes

- The information sought in this section is needed to determine whether your Masters degree complies with the prior research methods training outcomes required by both SeNSS and the ESRC (see p.6 for further information).
- These learning outcomes have been agreed in order to ensure you are in the best possible position to undertake your PhD research, and to build your employability and transferrable skills. For detailed advice on how your research methods training is evaluated, click [here](#).
- Based on the information you provide, if your Masters degree and/or your professional experience is judged as having sufficient research methods training, you will be permitted to apply for a +3 PhD.
- If your Masters degree or professional experience does not include sufficient research methods training, you will either be required to study for a second Masters degree via our 1+3 structure of study, or you might be awarded one or two terms' worth of additional funding (either a +3.25 or a +3.5 award) to complete this training.
- There are seven elements of research methods training to be assessed. For each of these seven elements, there is a list of all the types of training you may have undergone or where your professional experience may have covered these:

- the use of software;
 - academic communication;
 - research design;
 - basic scientific method;
 - qualitative research methods;
 - quantitative research methods; and,
 - and general research knowledge and skills.
- Please tick all of those which apply, and state *either* which modules covered this training, and how it was covered, *or* how your professional experience has covered these.
 - If you have had formal training in these elements, please provide the name of the module which covered these, the mark you obtained for that module, and either provide a hyperlink to a webpage with a detailed module outline, or upload a copy of the detailed module outline in Section 7 of the application form “Upload your documents”.

Work Experience

This section applies to all applicants.

This section asks whether you have any work experience that is relevant to your proposed project. If you have **never had any work experience**, please don't worry, as this will **not** have a negative effect on your application.

Question: You will be asked whether you have any work experience which is relevant to your research project.

- If you answer “**No**”, *you will next be asked to provide your personal statement.*
- If you answer “**Yes**”, please read the notes below and answer the following additional questions:
 - Provide details of your work experience; and,
 - If there have been any gaps in your work experience record, please explain these.

Notes

- Where you have held more than one relevant post, please record all of these, placing line breaks in between each, using the following format:
 - The name of your employer/organisation;
 - The position you held in this organisation;
 - The date you started working there, and the date on which you finished your employment;
 - Briefly, what your responsibilities were in relation to your position; and,
 - Any on the job training you received and/or skills you gained. If these have any bearing on your proposed research project, please provide details of how this training and these skills will benefit you in carrying out your research.

Question: You will be asked to explain any gaps in your professional experience record.

This section only applies to applicants who have professional experience, and for whom there are gaps in this experience

Notes

- Gaps may appear in your record from taking parental leave, being someone's carer, or being unemployed, etc.
- Please note that any gaps you list will **not disqualify you from applying** for a studentship, **nor will they have a negative effect on your application**. SeNSS welcomes applications from people who have had career or work breaks.

Personal Statement

This section applies to all applicants.

Please read the notes below carefully in drafting your statement, for which there is a **maximum word count of 500 words**.

Question: You will be asked to provide a personal statement, addressing the issues set out in the guidance below.

Notes

- **Please give your reasons for applying.** In doing so, please address the following:
 - Why you think you deserve a studentship;
 - Why you wish to study with SeNSS specifically, and how you plan to take advantage of the opportunities SeNSS offers its students; and,
 - Your preparedness for the demands of postgraduate life by discussing your passion for your topic, as well as your existing academic, professional, and life knowledge and experience.
- **What are your career goals:** in particular, tell us about your long-term career ambitions, and how a SeNSS studentship relates to these.
- **Your preparation for further study:** discuss how your undergraduate and/or Masters degree, as well as any life or professional experience you have, has prepared you for your proposed research project.
- **Your skillset:**
 - Highlight your relevant skills and knowledge that will enable you to make an impact, and explain what that impact will be.

- Summarise your abilities in core areas related to your research project, including IT, organisation, communication, time management and critical thinking.
- Make reference to any grades you've achieved, awards you've won, placements you've undertaken, or conferences you've attended which have either helped prepare you for your research project, or which make you a great candidate for a SeNSS studentship.

Declaration

This section applies to all applicants.

Please read the declaration carefully and tick the box to confirm you accept these terms and conditions.

Click 'Save and Continue' to move to the next section

SECTION 7: UPLOAD YOUR DOCUMENTS

This section applies to all applicants.

Question: You will be asked to upload all the documents needed to support your application.

Notes

Documents to be uploaded include the following:

- **Degree certificates and/or degree award letters:** please scan your degree certificates or official award letters and upload these.
- **Transcripts (for those who hold a non-compliant Masters or professional experience which has provided them with research methods training):** please scan copies of any detailed module outlines or transcripts of modules you mentioned in Section 6 – your research training methods – and upload these. If you have any certificates from completing professional training, please scan and upload these.
- **Letter of support, if you have a collaborative element to your studentship:** if you are applying for a studentship with a collaborative element, please scan your letter of support from your collaborative partner and upload this.
- Please give each document a **title** which reflects what it contains e.g. a student named Aaliyah Smith who is uploading their undergraduate degree certificate could call it "ASmith undergrad degree cert".
- Upload documents only as the following **file types** .doc, .docx, .pdf or .jpeg/.jpg.

- Once you have uploaded your documents, scroll to the very bottom of the page to see a list of documents that you have **successfully uploaded**. Please check that all your necessary documents are listed there.
- You can upload as many documents as you like, but please **do not upload documents other than those listed above**. For example, please do not upload a cv, any articles you have written, any letters of reference etc.

SECTION 8: ENSURING YOUR APPLICATION IS COMPLETE

- If you have not completed any questions forming part of your application, exceeded the word or character limits set for any sections, or not uploaded the correct documents, a red box will pop up below the declaration noting this. Please go back and correct this before submitting your application.

COMPLETING THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FORM

This form applies to all applicants.

- You will also need to complete the Equal Opportunities form if you have not already done so via “Tasks” on your HEApply home page. Once you have completed the rest of your application, a notification will appear in the red box below the declaration for you to complete this form. Please click on the link and complete it.

SeNSS is committed to an Equal Opportunities Policy, and we acknowledge and embrace diversity.

SeNSS and the ESRC are committed to ensuring that those applying for studentships are selected on merit. By completing this form, you will help us to ensure that our policies and procedures are effective in avoiding discrimination and promoting equal opportunities in awarding studentships. SeNSS needs your help and co-operation to enable it to do this. Filling in this form is not voluntary but, if there are questions you do not wish to answer, you have the option of ticking “prefer not to say”. The information you provide will be used for monitoring and statistical purposes only, will stay confidential, and be stored securely. Access to this information will be limited to the core SeNSS staff members.

The information you provide on this form will not be released to those involved in making the decision on who receives a studentship. However, it may be used by those at your home university to decide whether – if you meet certain criteria – to nominate your application to the Pathway selection phase of the competition as an additional candidate. As such, if you do meet our widening participation criteria, we would encourage you to provide that information in our EO form. For further information on our widening participation criteria, please click [here](#).

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Reminder: the deadline for submitting your application is **12.00 GMT on Friday 20 January 2023**.

Next steps

- There are three review phases in our student-led studentship competition.
 - First, your application will first be assessed by your **chosen university** (*this will take place from 20 January to 17 February 2023*). If your application is successful in this round, it will go to the next round of the competition.
 - If your application is unsuccessful, you will be notified via HEIapply, but your chosen university is responsible for sending you any feedback on your application.
 - The second round consists of a view of applications by a **panel of experts in your discipline** (*this will take place from 17 February to 27 March 2023*). If your application is successful in this round, it will go to the final round of the competition.
 - If your application is unsuccessful, you will be notified via HEIapply and SeNSS is responsible for sending you any feedback on your application.
 - The final round consists of the **SeNSS Management Board members** reviewing and approving the final studentship awards (*this will take place from 27 March to 14 April 2023*).
- If your application is short-listed for award at the SeNSS Management Board phase, you will be advised via HEIapply by the middle of April whether you have been awarded a studentship.
- As noted, unsuccessful applicants will be provided with a few lines of constructive feedback by SeNSS if their application does not progress past the Pathway phase of the competition. However, SeNSS is not able to provide in-depth feedback due to the number of applications we receive.