



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

AHRC Postgraduate Studentships

A Guide to Student Recruitment and Nomination

**Version 5.1
January 2010**

Version Tracker		
Date published	Version	Changes

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Introduction

1. The AHRC has three competitions in which a Research Organisation (RO) can apply to the Council for a number of studentships and then recruit students to fill these places. Once recruited, suitable students, who must meet all the relevant eligibility criteria set out in the Council's *Guide to Student Eligibility* (available to download from the AHRC's web site <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/BGP.aspx>), are then nominated to the Council by the RO.
2. The three competitions are
 - **Block Grant Partnerships** (BGP) (Doctoral and Master's awards) <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/BGP.aspx>
 - **Collaborative Doctoral Awards** (CDA) (Doctoral awards only) <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/CollaborativeDoctoralAwards.aspx>
 - Research Grants who may recruit **Project Studentships** (PS) attached to their Grant (Doctoral awards only) <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/RG-StandardRoute.aspx>
3. Student Recruitment and Nomination Guidelines apply to all Competitions, further competition specific advice is contained in the competition sections.

Studentship Recruitment and Nomination Guidelines

4. ROs that are nominating students to the AHRC will be expected to have suitable student recruitment procedures in place and to follow best practice on recruitment and selection and equal opportunities policy that will allow them to identify and recruit students of outstanding achievement and potential from all backgrounds. Such procedures should ensure that students are recruited to the available studentships in a fair, open and transparent way and that the highest quality eligible students receive AHRC funding.
5. The AHRC would expect organisations to comply with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) '*Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*' (*Code of practice*). For information on recruitment and selection please refer to Section 10: '*Admissions to higher education - September 2006*'. The document can be found by following this link: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section10/default.asp>
6. Following the principles of the QAA Code of Practice, most ROs will have in place their own guidelines, policies and procedures to ensure good practice across all their recruitment and selection activities. This would be expected to include guidelines on all aspects of the process from induction through to promotion, so that applicants are provided with accurate information and fair treatment at all stages to enable them to make informed choices.

7. Particular attention is drawn to the need for ROs to have recruitment and selection procedures that ensure equality of opportunities and fairness of treatment for all students seeking AHRC studentships.
8. The AHRC expects ROs to ensure that staff responsible for recruitment and admissions are aware of and understand legal requirements relating to the processes and the need to conform to such legislation. In respect of equal opportunities requirements, ROs will wish to put in place monitoring arrangements to satisfy themselves that:
 - Appropriate attention is paid to relevant legislation and guidance available both internally and externally
 - An effective support infrastructure is in place for students with special needs
 - Students are made aware of opportunities to apply for additional or special funding and how to apply for such funds
 - Fees-only and part-time students are treated equitably with full-award and full-time students.
9. RO staff and, if applicable, any staff from a partner organisation or other external agency involved in the recruitment process should be informed about the RO's policies, procedures and practices with regard to student recruitment and selection, and about the eligibility criteria relevant to the particular studentship.
10. The AHRC recommends that in order to meet the requirements of equal opportunities and to ensure that the best applicants are attracted the selection of students should be made **through open competition by national advertisement of the studentships** available.
11. Studentships should be advertised by the most appropriate method for the target audience, typically the national educational press, through jobs.ac.uk and via an RO's website.
12. On all advertisements, regardless of the medium being employed, it must be clearly stated that they are AHRC studentships.
13. Studentships attract national rates for tuition fees and a maintenance grant (depending on the eligibility of the individual student), which are set annually. The AHRC will inform ROs of these at the earliest opportunity and the current rates are available on the AHRC's web site <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/BGP.aspx>.
14. ROs will be paid based on the students nominated. They must allocate the money to the individual student as designated by the AHRC and use it for the purpose for which it was provided.
15. Recruitment must take place on the basis of selecting the best students that meet the eligibility criteria. How much an individual studentship might be worth in monetary terms must not be a factor in recruitment. The AHRC will continue to monitor the number of awards given to part-time and fees-only students and would expect these to be in line with historical figures.

16. Please note that the AHRC is not able to provide funds or assistance in the process or the costs of advertising and recruitment.
17. The AHRC will not be involved in the recruitment and selection of students for nominated studentships. It is the responsibility of the RO to ensure each selected student meets the relevant residency, academic, subject and scheme eligibility criteria as set out in the *Guide to Student Eligibility* <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/BGP.aspx>. A studentship should not be offered to a student by the RO unless they are certain that they meet all the relevant eligibility criteria.
18. The RO must, as part of the recruitment process, seek any references, certificates or other information that is required to establish a student's suitability and eligibility for an AHRC studentship.
19. The AHRC reserves the right to request further information from the RO or to reject a nominated student if, from the information provided on the nomination form, the student does not appear to meet the eligibility criteria.
20. RO staff involved in recruitment to AHRC studentships must ensure that the relevant studentship is available and that the RO has given them the authority to make an offer of a studentship before making such an offer to a student and nominating them.
21. The AHRC is not able to enforce a restriction on the number of ROs to which students may make a studentship application, but the RO may ask to be made aware by the student that multiple applications have been made. Students will need to choose which one to accept before their nomination form or Studentship application is submitted to the AHRC.
22. Students can only apply for an AHRC studentship under **one** of the AHRC's competitions. The AHRC will not receive any nominations in advance of the Studentship Competition, and will only accept nominations for students who have **not** submitted an application to the Studentship Competition (for full details about the Studentship Competition please refer to our web site <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/StudentshipCompetition.aspx>). In addition, students may not withdraw their Studentship Competition application in order to be nominated to a BGP, CDA or PS place. However, if a student is unsuccessful in the Studentship Competition, they may subsequently be nominated to a BGP, CDA or PS place.
23. If the AHRC receives more than one nomination form or competition application form from the same student, they reserve the right to reject all the nominations and applications from that student.
24. Only students who have been offered and have accepted a studentship by the RO should be nominated to the AHRC. Please note that in accepting the nomination the student is agreeing to abide by the AHRC's terms and conditions for a studentship award. The RO **must not** nominate a student who does not accept the terms and conditions.
25. ROs must be aware of, and ensure they submit, **all** nominations by the appropriate route and by the AHRC's published nominations deadline for the

particular competition and/or round (see competition sections for more details).

26. With all nominated studentships, ROs should make selected students aware that the **final** offer of a studentship is subject to confirmation of the nomination by the AHRC.
27. The AHRC will formally confirm acceptance of a nominated student to the RO and the student.
28. In the event of an RO being unable, for whatever reason, to recruit a suitable student to fill any of its available studentship places, they must contact the AHRC as soon as possible to discuss what course of action or options might be available.
29. ROs will be monitored on their recruitment and selection of students by the AHRC and may be subject to penalties or sanctions if their recruitment and selection procedures are deemed to be unfair.

Block Grant Partnerships (BGP)

30. A Block Grant Partnership award consists of a number of studentships for either Doctoral, Research Preparation Master's (RPM) or Professional Preparation Master's awards (PPM) or a combination thereof, and against defined subject areas, each year over a five year period as detailed in the award letter
31. The AHRC will publish, on its website, a list of the ROs that hold a BGP.
32. The AHRC is not able to directly advertise studentships or act as a broker between potential students and ROs. Students must contact and apply directly to the RO in which they are interested with regards to the availability and selection process for studentships.
33. ROs should recruit students **on an annual basis** to fill their BGP studentship places for the coming academic year.
34. ROs must advertise and recruit to the specified number of studentships in each subject in each scheme (doctoral, RPM or PPM) and are not permitted to alter these without express permission from the AHRC. BGPs are awarded as a number of studentships not a cash sum, therefore it is not possible for an RO to allocate lower stipends in order to provide additional studentships. However, an RO may wish to provide additional studentships from its own funds.
35. Although a BGP can support both the 1+3 and the 2+2 model for postgraduate study, ROs must not offer studentships on that basis at the outset. The separate Master's and Doctoral schemes remain an integral part of the AHRC's postgraduate strategy.
36. Students who have had a BGP Master's award and wish to remain at the same RO must re-apply for doctoral funding, in competition with other applicants,

following their Master's study. A student must not be offered both a Master's and Doctoral studentship at the outset of their studies.

37. ROs must ensure that the students they recruit meet the eligibility criteria of the relevant schemes for which the studentships have been awarded, whether in the Doctoral scheme, the Research Preparation Master's scheme or the Professional Preparation Master's scheme. RO's must adhere to the rules of the schemes including length of studentships and minimum periods of study and whether awards are full-time, part-time or fees only. Please see the *Guide to Student Eligibility* for more details on the schemes.
38. Students are normally expected to start their course on 1st October of the year in which the award is made. Exceptionally, and with prior agreement, students can start on the 1st January.
39. Unique reference numbers for each studentship were provided with your offer letter (eg 0477). Each nomination submitted must have a relevant reference number so AHRC and BGP co-ordinators can ensure that the BGP profile of awards is adhered too. Please note that the year refers to students expecting to start on 1st October of that year. So for the second cohort of students starting on 1st October 2010 you would use the 2010 reference numbers; you use these references for all students starting in the 2010/11 academic year even if they are starting on 1st January 2011 (the latest start date possible)
40. ROs should not recruit students to specific pre-determined research topics through a BGP. The AHRC wishes to ensure that the BGP system is able to foster and encourage innovation, and that students will still be able to approach an RO with whatever project they want to undertake. ROs will need to determine and be satisfied that a proposed project falls within a subject area awarded under a BGP.
41. Doctoral students should be recruited by the broad subject area in which BGP studentships have been awarded to the RO, not by specific project or thesis title.
42. Master's students should be recruited to courses falling within the broad subject area and particular Master's scheme (Research Preparation or Professional Preparation) in which BGP studentships have been awarded to the RO.
43. After consulting the Guide to Student Eligibility <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Documents/Guide%20to%20Student%20Eligibility.pdf> if a member of the RO's staff is unsure about a student's eligibility, they should contact their BGP co-ordinator or registry in the first instance. They can then contact the AHRC for further advice if this is required.
44. The nomination period for the second year of BGPs (i.e. for students to commence on 1 October 2010) will open on **7 May 2010** and close on **29 June 2010**. All nominations for available BGP studentships places must be submitted by this date.

45. All nominations must be completed and submitted through the Research Council's Joint-electronic Submission (JeS) system www.je-s.rcuk.ac.uk. If you require any help using this system, please contact the JeS Helpdesk on JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk or +44 (0)1793 44 4164. Full context specific help is provided in the JeS system.
46. Please note that although the forms will be able to be viewed before the 7th May, you will not be able to complete the project details section and submit the form until the 7th May to prevent early submission.
47. Organisations are advised to review the nomination form in JeS at the earliest opportunity to ensure they fully understand the process involved. Members of staff at the organisation co-ordinating nominations require a JeS account, and students will need a student level JeS account – please contact the JeS helpdesk if you need assistance with this process.
48. The AHRC may allow some flexibility if a nominated student subsequently withdraws prior to commencing study. AHRC must be informed immediately and will consider each on a case by case basis. RO's will be informed if they can re-nominate to a place but an RO may be able to re-recruit to the studentship place prior to the closing date for nominations.
49. If an RO is having trouble recruiting students to fill its studentship places, the BGP co-ordinator should contact the AHRC as soon as possible to discuss the options available. If AHRC authorisation is given for a re-nomination or virement the RO will be given instructions and a closing date to do this.

Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA)

50. A Collaborative Doctoral Award will normally encompass one studentship, but where there is a large overarching project awards can be made for up to three studentships to run concurrently. All studentships must be recruited to and nominated in the year for which they were awarded.
51. If the award is for an 'extended programme', ROs must recruit and nominate a student each year over three consecutive years starting in the year for which they were first awarded.
52. Studentships awarded under Strategic Initiatives such as Religion and Society or Science and Heritage are normally known as Collaborative Research Studentships (CRS). These may be subject to additional criteria and are normally only offered as full-time studentships due to the restrictions on the overall length of the programme.
53. The recruitment and selection of students to CDAs should involve both the academic and non-academic partners to ensure both are in agreement that the best student is selected and to engender a shared ownership of all decisions relating to that studentship. Selecting, retaining and supporting the right student is key to the success of the project, so the collaborators must be fully involved and supportive of both project and student.

54. Experience has shown that collaborative studentships can often be attractive to high quality graduates with an interest in research that is of direct relevance to the non-academic workplace and who might not consider pursuing doctoral study in the conventional way. Therefore it is important in this context to consider the AHRC's recommendation that in order to meet the requirements of equal opportunities policy and to ensure that the best applicants are attracted, the selection of students should be made through open competition by advertisement of the studentship.
55. Studentships are normally advertised in the educational press or through jobs.ac.uk, but for CDAs partners may also want to consider targeting their recruitment at specific subject communities via subject associations, relevant websites and journals or university departments.
56. It is recognised that some collaborative projects will have originated with a particular student since, where that student has the appropriate ability and as long as they meet the eligibility criteria, it would be unfair and inappropriate for the studentship to be advertised. There may also be instances where a very particular knowledge or skill-set is required, which means that a project is developed with a student in mind or that the field of potential well qualified students is extremely limited. In such cases, nomination of the student without competition may be justified, but it is considered advisable that the majority of collaborative studentships should be advertised.
57. Partners need to consider the nature and location of the interview or selection process, for example, whether it should take place at the RO or at the non-academic organisation's premises. Ideally, a combination of both would be useful to potential students, but it is recommended that it takes place at the non-academic organisation where possible.
58. CDAs differ in that students are being recruited to pre-determined projects, and hence need to be made aware of the context in which they are taking on their research. Equally, they must be allowed scope to help shape their thesis and have input into how the project will operate.
59. Due to the nature of CDA projects, nominations will only be accepted for the entire duration of the award, i.e. a student can not have already commenced study.
60. Students are normally expected to start their course on 1st October of the year in which the award is made. Exceptionally students can start on the 1st January. CDAs may be able to negotiate a different start date.
61. It is also important to raise awareness that collaborative studentships potentially place particular or greater demands on a student. They will have to balance two sets of supervisors, colleagues and working environments and deal with the conflicts, tensions and stresses that may arise. Such issues should not be shied away from and may be usefully covered at interview.
62. The AHRC is not able to directly advertise studentships or act as a broker between potential students and partners, but it will publish a list of successful projects on its website after each round is completed. The list will be published annually, usually in April, and will include the name of the lead

applicant in the RO. Potential students will be advised to contact the lead applicant directly with regards to the availability and selection process of any studentships in which they are interested.

63. The AHRC will allow some flexibility if a nominated student subsequently withdraws after commencing their studies. An RO may be able to re-recruit in full to the studentship place within the first year of the project. Studentships should be re-advertised in the same way, but it may be possible to offer it to a suitable candidate who had previously applied through open selection. Please contact AHRC for further advice.
64. The nomination period for CDA students (i.e. for students to commence on 1 October 2010) will open on **7th May 2010** and close on **29th July 2010**. All nominations for available studentships places must be submitted by this date.
65. All nominations must be completed and submitted through the Research Council's Joint-electronic Submission (JeS) system www.je-s.rcuk.ac.uk. If you require any help using this system, please contact the JeS Helpdesk on JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk or +44 (0)1793 44 4164. Full context specific help is provided in the JeS system.
66. Please note that although the forms will be able to view before the 7th May, you will not be able to complete the project details section and submit the form until the 7th May to prevent early submission.
67. Organisations are advised to review the nomination form in JeS at the earliest opportunity to ensure they fully understand the process involved. Members of staff at the organisation co-ordinating nominations require a JeS account, and students will need a student level JeS account – please contact the JeS helpdesk if you need assistance with this process.

Project Studentships (PS)

68. Studentship funding may be sought as part of a Research Grant application for one or two full-time (three years) or part-time (five years) doctoral project studentships whose work will contribute to the Research Grants project as a whole.
69. It is not permissible to recruit a student who is seeking to complete a doctorate which has already started or will start prior to the start date of the Research Grant project.
70. The studentship must fall completely within the duration of the Research Grant's project. Therefore, a Research Grant's project with a full-time student must last at least three years and a Research Grant's project with a part-time student must last five years.
71. Due to the nature of Project Students, nominations will only normally be accepted for a student who has not already commenced study. In exceptional circumstances AHRC may agree to a nomination where a student has already commenced study, further advice should be sought from AHRC before a nomination is submitted.

72. Students are normally expected to start their course on 1st October of the year in which the award is made, however, Project Studentships attached to a Research Grant award can start at any time provided the full period of the award remains within the Research Grant award dates.
73. A PS must provide added value to the project, but also allow the student sufficient independence to make their own original contribution to scholarship. Whilst the Research Grant's project should be a viable project without the contribution of the project student, the student should benefit from working within the structure of the project as a whole.
74. PS must be supervised by a Principle Investigator or a Co-Investigator named on the Research Grant. The supervisor must be based at the RO where the project student is registered.
75. Whilst recognising the specific nature of research projects, in order to meet the requirements of equal opportunities and to ensure that the best applicants are attracted, PS should be advertised as widely as possible and by the most appropriate method to reach the target audience.
76. The AHRC will allow some flexibility if a nominated student subsequently withdraws after they have commenced study. An RO may be able to re-recruit to the studentship place but only within the first year of the project and the duration of the new student's doctoral project must still fall within the duration of the Research Grant's project. Studentships should be re-advertised in the same way, but it may be possible to offer it to a suitable candidate who had previously applied through open selection. Please contact AHRC for further advice.
77. Nominations for Project Students attached to AHRC Research Grants can be accepted at any time. All nomination forms should be submitted through JeS www.je-s.rcuk.ac.uk. If you require any help using this system, please contact the JeS Helpdesk on JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk or +44 (0)1793 44 4164. Full context specific help is provided in the JeS system..
78. Nominations for Project Studentships awarded through a strategic programme, for example Religion and Society, must be submitted on the nomination form provided with your original offer letter, if you require an electronic copy please contact AHRC. Please note that Nominations for these Project Students are not being accepted through JeS at this time.