



2018/19 SeNSS ESRC-FUNDED STUDENT-LED STUDENTSHIP APPLICATION: GUIDANCE NOTES

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A. A BRIEF OVERVIEW: APPLYING FOR A SeNSS ESRC-FUNDED STUDENT-LED STUDENTSHIP

In order to be considered for a SeNSS studentship, you must first apply to your chosen SeNSS university for a place to study. **The deadline for making this application, no matter which of the ten SeNSS universities you apply to, is 23:59 GMT on 21 January 2017.** No extensions to this deadline will be permitted.

We strongly advise you to apply early to your chosen university to ensure that you have enough time to consult with your proposed supervisor in preparing your application.

SeNSS universities will only provide their selected applicants with access to the SeNSS online application process. Each university has a slightly different internal selection procedure and deadline, so please contact your SeNSS university's named administrator to find out what your specific application deadline is. A list of the named administrators is available at the end of this guidance, in Section F.

You must consult with your proposed primary supervisor when completing the SeNSS studentship application form, particularly regarding your research proposal. Your proposed primary supervisor will also need to provide a supporting statement for your application. It is your responsibility to ensure that your proposed supervisor submits this statement by the application deadline. By logging in to your SeNSS online application account, you will be able to see whether your proposed supervisor has submitted their supporting statement, or not.

You will need to provide the names and contact details for two referees for your application. Your referees will be contacted to provide references for you. It is your responsibility to ensure that your referees submit their statements by the application deadline. By logging in to your SeNSS online application account, you will be able to see whether or not your referees have submitted their supporting statements.

Your application will be judged according to the criteria outlined in Section E of this guidance. Please read them carefully, and bear them in mind when completing your application.

You must complete the SeNSS studentship application form online. Print outs and other forms of the application will not be accepted. Please use at least 12pt font when completing the application form.

Please note that your chosen institution may ask you to attend an interview in respect of your application for a PhD place, and/or your application for a SeNSS studentship.

B. DETAILED NOTES ON COMPLETING YOUR SeNSS ESRC STUDENT-LED STUDENTSHIP APPLICATION

1. General information about the SeNSS Doctoral Training Partnership

The SeNSS Consortium consists of the following member institutions:

- City, University London
- University of East Anglia
- University of Essex
- Goldsmiths, University of London
- University of Kent
- Reading University
- Roehampton University
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- University of Surrey
- University of Sussex

SeNSS offers studentships across 13 Pathways, which are discipline-based. Please note that not all SeNSS partner institutions offer all 13 Pathways, and you will need to determine whether your chosen University offers the Pathway in which you wish to study.

- **Business and Management Studies** (*offered by City, UEA, Essex, Kent, Reading, Royal Holloway, Surrey and Sussex*);
- **Development Studies** (*offered by UEA, Reading, Royal Holloway, Surrey and Sussex*);
- **Economics** (*offered by City, UEA, Essex, Reading, Royal Holloway, Surrey and Sussex*);
- **Education** (*offered by UEA, Goldsmiths, Reading, Roehampton and Sussex*);
- **Human Geography** (*offered by UEA, Reading, Royal Holloway and Sussex*);
- **Linguistics** (*offered by UEA, Essex, Kent, Reading and Surrey*);
- **Politics and International Relations** (*offered by UEA, Essex, Kent, Reading, Royal Holloway and Sussex*);
- **Psychology** (*offered by UEA, Essex, Goldsmiths, Kent, Reading, Royal Holloway and Sussex*);
- **Science, Technology, and Sustainability Studies** (*offered by UEA, Kent, Surrey and Sussex*);
- **Social Anthropology** (*offered by UEA, Goldsmiths, Kent, Roehampton and Sussex*);
- **Social Work and Social Policy** (*offered by UEA, Kent and Sussex*);
- **Socio-Legal Studies** (*offered by UEA, Essex, Kent, Reading and Sussex*); and,
- **Sociology** (*offered by Essex, Goldsmiths, Kent and Sussex*).

2. The application process: creating your application and submitting it

Please click on the link your chosen SeNSS university's administrator has given you, and follow the instructions outlined below in order to create an account and complete your application. You can save your progress on your online application at any time, exit the application, and return to work on it later.

If you prefer, there is a step by step video screencast which will guide you through this process. It is available at: <https://vimeo.com/236491296>. Alternatively, go to www.vimeo.com/senss and click on the video entitled "Applicant Guidance for the SeNSS Student-Led Competition" in order to view it.

1. Click on the link provided by the Administrative Lead, and create an account as per the screencast instructions.
2. Complete the personal information form and equal opportunities form
3. Complete the application form and sign the declaration
4. Upload your degree / training certificates and, if you are applying for a studentship with a collaborative element, please also upload a letter of support from your collaborative partner, if possible.
5. Complete the information forms for your three recommenders (your proposed supervisor and two referees).
6. Once you submitted your application, you will receive an email confirming that you have successfully submitted your application, and you will not be able to edit it further.
7. Your proposed primary supervisor and your referees will then receive emails asking them to view your application online, and write their supporting statements.

3. Detailed guidance on completing the application forms

There are three forms for you to complete as part of your SeNSS studentship application.

- First, you must complete a form which will ask for your personal details;
- Second, you must complete a form which deals with your research project;
- Third, you are requested to complete an equal opportunities form.

3.1. Form one: your personal details

SeNSS is committed to protecting equality and diversity principles wherever possible. Whilst we retain your personal details for SeNSS records, these will not show on your application. This means that all of those involved in assessing your application for funding will do so without access to any of your personal details, in order to eliminate any opportunity for unconscious bias to play a role in this process.

Personal details: Your name and date of birth

Please provide your first name, surname and your date of birth. If your surname has changed since birth for any reason, please could you include both your surname at birth and your current surname, as it is noted on official documents such as your passport or identity document.

Reference number

In order to anonymise your application, we give it a unique reference number. This is created from the following information, which you will be asked to provide:

- Your initials (from your first name and surname);
- The name of your chosen SeNSS university; and,
- The name of your SeNSS Pathway.

For example, John Smith attending the University of Essex in the Sociology Pathway would have a reference of: **JSEssSocio**;

and

Aaleyah Mohammed attending the University of Sussex in the Development Studies Pathway would have a reference of: **AMSussDev**.

Contact details

Please provide your contact details for the duration of the SeNSS studentship competition (24 October 2016 to 30 September 2018), as we may need to contact you during this period.

Please provide an address to which we can send any letters to you. If you know you will be changing address during this period, please provide both addresses you will use during this time, and tell us when you will be living at each of these addresses.

Please also provide an email address and telephone number (including country and area code, if relevant) so that we can contact you using these methods if need be.

Residential eligibility for a SeNSS ESRC-funded studentship

Please check your residential eligibility for a SeNSS studentship, as **only Home and EU students are eligible to apply. The ONLY exception to this rule is that international students may apply to the Economics Pathway and, if they are successful, will be given a full award.**¹

Both Home and EU students must satisfy the standard Research Council eligibility criteria, which are available at:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/termsconditionstraininggrants-pdf/>

These criteria are also set out below.

To be eligible for a **full award** you must have:

- Settled status in the UK, meaning there are no restrictions on how long you can stay in the UK; **AND**
- Been 'ordinarily resident' in the UK for 3 years prior to 30 September 2017, when the studentship starts. 'Ordinarily resident' means that you must have been normally residing in the UK (apart from any temporary or occasional absences; **AND**

¹ Please note that ESRC rules stipulate that *each ESRC DTP*, including SeNSS, is allowed to offer full awards in Economics to international students only up to 35% of the total number of economics awards made by that DTP in any year.

- Not been residing in the UK wholly or mainly for the purpose of full-time education. However, this criterion does not apply to UK or EU nationals.

A **full SeNSS ESRC-funded studentship award** includes the following for the duration of the award:

- your University tuition fees: these are paid in full directly to your University;
- a tax-free maintenance stipend to pay your living costs: this is currently set at £14,296 per 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 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;**
- a research training support grant;
- access to other funds to be used for overseas fieldwork, overseas institutional visits, difficult language training etc.

Students from EU countries other than the UK are generally eligible for a **fees-only award**. To be eligible for a fees-only award, you must be ordinarily resident in a member state of the EU, in the same way as UK students must be ordinarily resident in the UK.

A fees-only award includes the following for the duration of the award:

- your University tuition fees will be paid in full directly to your University;
- a research training support grant; and,
- access to other funds to be used for overseas fieldwork, overseas institutional visits, difficult language training etc.

However, you will NOT receive a tax-free maintenance stipend to pay your living costs.

Award type

Once you are certain of your eligibility for funding, please declare that you have checked your eligibility and that you believe yourself to be eligible for either a full award or a fees-only award. If you indicate that you are eligible for a full award, you will be asked if you wish to apply for a full award, or whether you wish to apply for a fees-only award. If you already have funds available to support yourself, you may wish to apply for a fees-only award.

If you have any questions about your eligibility for a SeNSS studentship, please contact the administrator at your home institution in the first instance. You will find their contact details at the end of this guidance, in Section F.

Mode of study: part-time or full-time study

SeNSS offers both full and part-time study. Part-time study is offered at a minimum of 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE), for a period of six years. If you are unsure which mode of study is right for you, please discuss this with your proposed primary supervisor. You will need to confirm on your application form whether you are applying for full or part-time study.

3.2. Form two: your research project

Question 1: Structure of studentship

This question asks you to confirm the structure of studentship you are applying for. SeNSS offers the following studentship structures:

- **+3 studentship:** this consists of a three-year PhD. If you are applying for a +3 studentship, you will have to show that you have already met the core research training requirements necessary to prepare you for your PhD;
- **1+3 studentship:** this comprises an integrated one-year Masters degree and a three-year PhD. Students who do not meet the core research methods training requirements will be required to undertake an integrated one-year Masters degree which will deliver this core training, in order to prepare them for their three-year PhD;
- **2+2 studentship:** this comprises a longer Masters programme followed by a shorter PhD programme; and,
- **+4 studentship:** this comprises both core and advanced training within the PhD programme.

All Pathways offer 1+3 and +3 studentships. However:

- **2+2 studentships** are only offered by the Economics, and Politics and International Relations Pathways.
- **+4 studentships** are offered by the following Pathways: Business and Management Studies, Economics, Education, Human Geography, Politics and International Relations, some sub-Pathways within Science, Technology, and Sustainability Studies, Socio-Legal Studies, and Sociology.

Please indicate which structure of studentship you are applying for, but be advised that, if SeNSS determines that you have not already met the majority of the core research methods training requirements, you may be offered a 1+3 studentship even if you have applied for a +3 studentship. The determination of which structure of studentship you will be offered will be based evidence provided in the past research methods training section of this application form (see Question 9, below).

You will be asked to confirm in your application that you understand that, although you may have applied for a particular structure of studentship, you may be awarded a different structure of studentship, depending on your prior training.

Applying for a SeNSS studentship if you have already started your 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 2018, you meet the following requirements:

- You have **at least 50% of your period of study remaining** (excluding your 'writing up' period); AND
- your structure of study is either a +3 studentship or a +4 studentship.

For example, if you have been registered for your PhD for one year of a full-time PhD at the point at which the studentship would commence, then you would be eligible to

apply for 2 years' further funding. If you had been registered for 2 years at this point, then you would not be eligible to apply for a studentship.

If your application is successful, you will receive funding for the remainder of your studies. However, you may only apply for a SeNSS studentship if you are already studying at one of the SeNSS universities, and your research project falls into one of the 13 SeNSS Pathways.

Studying for a Masters degree at a different institution to where you plan to study for your PhD

If you are proposing to study a 1+3 degree structure, it may be possible to take the "1" of your 1+3 at a different institution from your "+3". If this is your plan, then you will need to discuss this very early on with your chosen SeNSS university (with both your proposed primary supervisor and your chosen university's named administrator) which, in this case, will be the university you study at for your +3. Additional time will be required to organise this split between institutions, assuming it is possible.

The name or title of the Masters degree you are planning to take

Please note that you will only be able to take a Masters degree which has been judged by SeNSS to be compliant with certain training outcomes. These training outcomes have been set by the ESRC, and adopted by SeNSS.

In order to find out whether the Masters degree you want to take is compliant, please go to: [SeNSS Masters compliance database](#).

Here, you will find an Excel spreadsheet containing all the Masters degrees from all ten SeNSS universities which have been found to be compliant. Please ensure that you enter the exact name or title of the Masters degree in your application form, as there are many degrees with very similar names.

Question 2: The SeNSS institution at which you propose to study, your proposed department or school, and your proposed pathway

Please identify the SeNSS institution at which you propose to study. This will become your "home" institution. SeNSS permits you to make only one application in this student-led competition to one of its member institutions, as it is highly likely that there will be one institution within SeNSS which "fits" your proposed research topic best.

Please provide details of the department or school of study to which you have applied. Please note that SeNSS encourages cross-institutional co-supervision - where appropriate - in order to provide the best combination of supervisory expertise for your particular research project. For further information on cross-institutional co-supervision, please see Question 12, below.

Please also identify the name of the Pathway your research topic falls under. A full list of the Pathways SeNSS offers is included on page 4, Section B.1. of this guidance. You will be asked if your research topic is inter- or multi-disciplinary: if it is, please also identify the other disciplines which are covered by your topic.

For +3, 2+2, and +4 applicants, please select the institution at which you propose to study, and the primary Pathway within which your research proposal falls.

For 1+3 applicants, please select the institution at which you propose to study, and the primary Pathway within which the +3 element of your studentship falls.

Question 3: Concurrent funding applications

Please indicate whether you are also applying for any other funded studentship at any other university or any other studentship funded by one of the RCUK (Research Councils of the United Kingdom). A list of all the Research Councils is provided in the application form.

Please note: this is for information only, and **will not prejudice your application to SeNSS in any way.**

Question 4: Your research proposal

You should already have identified one academic at your chosen SeNSS university whom you think would be appropriate to act as your primary supervisor. **You must discuss your research proposal with your proposed primary supervisor before submitting your application form.** You will be asked to confirm in Question 12 of your application form that you have done this.

Nevertheless, it is your responsibility to write your own research proposal, that is, it must not be written by anyone else, such as your primary supervisor, or your referee. 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, then 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.

Your research proposal title and abstract

Please provide the following information about your research proposal:

- Research Proposal Title: please state the title of your proposed research project (or your current PhD title, if you have already begun your PhD). Please note that your title must be no more than **80 characters** in length.
- Research Proposal Abstract: please provide a brief abstract, or summary, of your research proposal. **This is limited to a maximum of 3,800 characters.** This 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. Please note that most SeNSS panellists who will be assessing your application will not be experts in your disciplinary area.

Description of your research proposal

In describing your research proposal, please note that there is a strict limit of 10,000 characters (including spaces between words) for this section. This limit applies text

contained in this text box, that is, to your proposal description, your research background and questions, your research methods, and your schedule of work. This limit of 10,000 characters does not include either your title or proposal, for which different character limits apply. Please note that the online application form does not accept footnotes.

Please note that, if you go above 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.

This section should follow the structure outlined below:

- Describe your research, including setting out the research background, context and questions;
- Describe the research methods you will use in conducting your research; and,
- Include a plan of your schedule of work.

Consider covering the following points in this section:

- In describing your research project, outline your reasons for undertaking it and consider addressing the following:
 - the key areas/issues of the project, and why you wish to pursue this research;
 - the research problems or questions you intend to address;
 - 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 non-academic beneficiaries, as appropriate;
 - the methods and critical approaches that you plan to use, and the sources for these, if appropriate;
 - 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.

Bibliography

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

Question 5: Ethical considerations raised by your research proposal

Both SeNSS and the ESRC require that all those funded through it will properly identify and address all ethical issues raised by their research projects throughout the duration of this research. Your research is required to conform to the ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics, which is available at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/>.

Please note that you must obtain ethical clearance from all appropriate bodies before your project commences. Your proposed primary supervisor will be able to advise you as to what is required in this regard.

You will be asked in your application form to confirm that you have considered the ethical considerations your research proposal gives rise to. You will also be asked to indicate the ethical considerations raised by your research proposal, and state how you plan to address these. If you are unsure as to whether there are ethical issues you need to consider in relation to your research project, please discuss this with your proposed primary supervisor in the first instance.

Question 6: Resourcing

This section deals with any additional resources (funding) you may need in order to successfully complete your studies. 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.

Costs incurred directly in support of your research

Please note that, if you are awarded a SeNSS ESRC-funded studentship, this will permit you to claim up to £750 per year for costs incurred directly in support of your research (**excluding** difficult language training and overseas fieldwork, which will be dealt with shortly). For example, these costs could be incurred in relation to interviewing subjects, travel, attendance at conferences, access to datasets etc.

Please confirm whether or not your research project is deliverable within the £750 annual limit. If your research project is likely to cost more than £750 per annum, please state what the cost per year is likely to be, and how you plan to meet these costs.

Overseas fieldwork

This question deals with whether or not you plan to conduct overseas fieldwork as part of your research project. Please note that there is a limited amount of money available that students can apply for to cover their overseas fieldwork costs, and it is highly unlikely that any student will be awarded more than £6,000 during their PhD for these costs. If you are awarded a SeNSS Studentship, once you have started your studies, you will need to submit a more detailed application for funding for overseas fieldwork, which must be supported by your primary supervisor.

If you answer “**yes**” to this question, you will be prompted to provide further information about your proposed overseas fieldwork. If you are “**unsure**” about whether you will conduct overseas fieldwork during your studies, please state that you are unsure, and explain why you are unsure at this point. If you are unsure, we would urge you to discuss this issue with your proposed primary supervisor, and try to resolve before submitting your application, if possible, whether or not overseas fieldwork is crucial to the success of your research project.

Please tell us where you plan to conduct your fieldwork, how long your trip will last, and how much you estimate it will cost, with a brief justification of those costs.

Please note: if you answer “no” to this question, you will not be permitted to apply for funding for overseas fieldwork if you are awarded a SeNSS studentship.

Difficult language training

If you need to learn a “difficult language” in order to carry out your research project, you will first need to check whether the language you want to learn qualifies as a “difficult” language. Please refer to Annex 2 on page 43 of the ESRC’s Postgraduate Funding Guide to find out how the ESRC defines a “difficult language” (this document is available at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/skills-and-careers/Studentships/postgraduate-funding-guide-for-accredited-doctoral-training-centres/>)

Please note that, if you are planning to spend extended time in the field, you are expected to be competent in the local language. You will need to ensure that you have allocated sufficient time to acquiring this competence, and have access to sufficient funds to cover this training.

Those reviewing your SeNSS application form will assess whether or not your research project is feasible in light of the difficult language training you propose to undertake. In exceptional circumstances, we may require further evidence that you will be capable of learning the language in the time available.

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 difficult language in order to carry out your research. If you are awarded a SeNSS studentship, you will need to submit a more detailed application for an extension to your funding, as this is not automatically granted, and will need to be supported by your primary supervisor.

Please note that, in order to apply later on in your studies for an extension to your funding in order to undertake difficult language training, you MUST have completed this section of your studentship application.

If you answer “yes” to the question as to whether you will require difficult language training, you will be prompted to provide further information about the training required. If you are “**unsure**” about whether you will need difficult language training, please state that you are unsure, and explain why you are unsure at this point. If you are unsure, we would urge you to discuss this issue with your proposed primary supervisor, and try to resolve before submitting your application, if possible, whether or not difficult language training is crucial to the success of your research project.

Please name the difficult language you wish to learn, estimate the anticipated length of the course you will need to take to learn it, estimate how much it will cost, and indicate whether you anticipate requiring an extension to your PhD in order to carry out this training. If you think you will require an extension, please give an estimate as to how long an extension you think you might need.

Question 7: Collaborative element to your studentship?

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 collaborate with them on the project. A collaborative partner can be a business, public or third sector organisation. Collaborative partners must contribute something of value to the research project, for example, contributing financially to help cover studentship costs, providing access to their datasets, or providing an additional supervisor. It is not only important to demonstrate that the 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 the research project.

This section seeks to establish whether or not your research project has a collaborative element. If not, please say so, and go to the next question (Question 8) in the application form.

Information about your collaborative partner

If you are applying for a studentship with a collaborative element, please provide the following information:

- The name of the collaborating organisation; and,
- The name, position, and contact details of your contact in this organisation.

If you are able to do so, please supply a letter of support from your collaborative partner for your research proposal. A template for a letter of support is available in the resources section of the SeNSS on-line application website. In brief, the letter should:

- State why the collaborator would like to be a partner in this research project, and what they hope to get out of the collaboration; and,
- provide a brief statement about what the collaborator will contribute to this project, including any cash and/or in-kind contributions.

If you have more than one collaborative partner, please include the details of this partner in your application form.

Nature and value of the contribution your collaborative partner will bring to your project

Please provide information about the nature and value of the contribution your collaborative partner will provide for your research project. Your collaborative partner can either contribute financially, 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 supervision for you, or allow you to access its datasets.

Question 8: Education and training

Please provide details of your higher education qualifications.

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.

- 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.

Question 9: Past Research Methods Training

The past research methods training section is included in this form in order to determine whether your Masters degree (if you hold one) complies with the prior research methods training outcomes required by both SeNSS and the ESRC. These learning outcomes have been agreed in order to ensure you are in the best possible position to undertake your PhD research. Both the ESRC’s requirements and SeNSS’s Learning Outcomes are available in the FluidReview resources section.

The first question in this section asks whether you already have a Masters degree. If you do not, please go on to Question 10.

If you hold a Masters degree AND you obtained it through a SeNSS university, you will need to check whether it is compliant with the ESRC and SeNSS’s learning outcomes. The database of compliant Masters degrees are available at: [SeNSS Masters compliance database](#).

- If your SeNSS Masters degree **IS** on this list, then please answer yes to this question, and move on to Question 10.
- If your SeNSS Masters degree **is NOT** on this list, then you must complete all of Question 9.

If you hold a Masters degree from a university which is not a member of the SeNSS consortium, you must complete all of Question 9.

If your Masters degree is judged as having sufficient research methods training, you will be permitted to apply for a +3 PhD.

If your Masters degree did not include sufficient research methods training, you will not be permitted to apply for a PhD (+3) immediately. Instead, you will be required to apply for a second Masters degree before studying for your PhD (a 1+3 studentship, or a 2+2 or a +4 studentship), in order to complete this training.

However, if you hold a Masters degree which is deemed non-compliant with the requisite prior research methods training outcomes, **you may still be permitted to apply for a PhD (a +3 studentship) if you can show that the training you have received as part of your professional experience fills any of the gaps in your research methods training.** Question 10 will ask you to detail this experience.

If you are required to complete Question 9 in full, we recommend that you discuss it with your proposed primary supervisor, as they will be able to guide you through completing it.

Research methods: prior training assessment

Please note that there are seven elements of research methods training that we need to assess. For each of these seven elements, there is a list of all the types of training you may have undergone within that element as part of your Masters degree. Please tick all of those for which you have undergone training and, in the text boxes provided, please state which modules covered this training, and how it was covered.

The seven elements are as follows:

- the use of software;
- academic communication;
- research design;
- basic scientific method;
- qualitative research methods;
- quantitative research methods; and,
- and general research knowledge and skills.

For each of the areas listed above, please provide the name of the module in which this area of research methods training was covered.

Question 10: Relevant professional experience

This section deals with any professional experience you may have. Please provide details of any professional experience, particularly any experience you have gained that is relevant to your proposed research project, and which has provided you with training in the research and professional skills necessary to undertake your studies.

This information is particularly important if you have any gaps in your academic training, as any training you may have received during your professional experience could fill these gaps.

The information you provide should follow the format outlined below. Where you have had more than one professional experience, please record all those experiences which are relevant, placing line breaks in between each professional experience you record:

- 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.

If there are any gaps in your professional experience record, please explain these. For example, 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 affect your application negatively.

Question 11: Personal statement

This question requires you to write a personal statement which includes the information requested in the outline below:

- **Your reasons for applying, and why you deserve a studentship:** please discuss your academic interests, and why you wish to study with SeNSS, your chosen university, and your chosen department. Please discuss those aspects of studying with SeNSS you find most appealing, such as taking certain modules or placement opportunities. Please demonstrate your preparedness for the demands of postgraduate life by discussing your passion for your topic, as well as your existing knowledge and experience.
- **your career goals:** please tell us about your long-term career ambitions, and how a SeNSS studentship relates to these.
- **your preparation:** please discuss how your undergraduate and/or Masters degree study has prepared you for your proposed research project.
- **your skillset:** please highlight your relevant skills and knowledge that will enable you to make an impact, summarising your abilities in core areas related to your research project, including IT, organisation, communication, time management and critical thinking. Please also 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 an excellent candidate for a SeNSS studentship.

Please note: there is a maximum word count of 500 words for this section.

Question 12: Consulting your supervisory team

Please note that you are required to consult with your proposed primary supervisor and/or your second supervisor, in drafting your application. This question requires you to confirm that you have consulted your supervisory team or, at a minimum, your primary supervisor, in drawing up your research project proposal.

For information: SeNSS and the ESRC both require that you have **at least two supervisors**, one of whom will be your **primary supervisor**. Your proposed primary supervisor must be based at your chosen SeNSS university, and you must consult this supervisor about completing your application form. You should discuss the issue of who your second supervisor should be with your primary supervisor, as they are well-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, or can be based at another SeNSS university.

Question 13: Applicant's declaration

You will be asked to confirm the following:

- That the information you have provided in this form is complete and accurate to the best of your knowledge at this date;
- That you fully understand that it is your responsibility to ensure that your application is submitted before the deadline set by your chosen SeNSS university, and that any missing or inaccurate information may render your application incomplete and ineligible;

- That you authorise SeNSS to disclose to the ESRC any information that is relevant to your application;
- That you authorise SeNSS to share any information contained in your application to any of its member institutions; and,
- That you have read and acknowledged the full terms and conditions of RCUK training grants, available at :
www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/termsconditionstraininggrants-pdf/

3.3. Form three: SeNSS Equal Opportunities information

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 the basis of 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, but filling in this form is voluntary. 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. In fact, your entire application is anonymised (by excluding details such as your name, date of birth, address etc.), so as to exclude as far as possible any unconscious bias that might exist on the part of those who will be assessing your application.

C. TASKS: PROVIDING YOUR SUPERVISORY TEAM AND YOUR REFEREES' DETAILS

After filling out the three forms that constitute your application, you will be asked to complete three tasks: to provide the names and details of your two referees, as well as your proposed primary supervisor.

In respect of providing your referees' details: please provide the names and contact details of two people who you want to act as your referees. **Both your referees will be contacted to ask them to supply a reference for you.** Please choose your referees carefully: they should have a good knowledge of your academic record, your research plans and your preparedness for doctoral study. If you have not been in higher education recently, please provide a referee who can comment on your professional record and capabilities in relation to your preparedness for doctoral study.

You may nominate one of the members of your supervisory team (either your primary or secondary supervisor) to act as one of your referees. If you ask your proposed primary supervisor to also act as one of your referees, they would need to provide **both**

a supervisor statement and a reference for you. However, it is not necessary for one of your referees to be one of your proposed supervisors.

Please note that at least one of your referees must not have any direct connection to your proposed PhD research project.

D. ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE APPLICATION FORM

Next steps

- You will need to save the form and exit it once you have completed filling it in. You will then be returned to your application home page.
- **Upload degree transcripts:** please scan your degree certificates or official award letters and official transcripts, and upload them to your application. You can do this by clicking the start button.
- **Upload a 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 it to your application. You can do this by clicking the start button.
- **Request recommendation: supervisor:** click the start button, which will open a new page. Please type in the first name, last name and email address of your proposed supervisor. You will also be asked how you know this person.
- **Request recommendation: referee 1:** click the start button, which will open a new page. Please type in the first name, last name and email address of your first referee. You will also be asked how you know this person.
- **Request recommendation: referee 2:** click the start button, which will open a new page. Please type in the first name, last name and email address of your second referee. You will also be asked how you know this person.

In order to ensure that your supervisor/referee completes a supporting statement for you, please inform them 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 in the event that they don't see the email requesting them to write a supporting statement.

Note: If your supervisor doesn't receive an email within 24 hours, you can try resending the request. If your supervisor still doesn't get the email, please contact FluidReview via their [support page](#). Please be sure to include the email address of your supervisor/referee.

Submitting your application

Once your application is complete, you must submit it online.

Please note that the final deadline for applying for a SeNSS studentship is set by your chosen university. Please ask their named administrator what this deadline is, as you must meet this deadline. A list of the named administrators follows at the end of this guidance.

Checklist of documents required for your application

- Course/module transcripts, award letters or degree certificates, as evidence of your relevant higher education or training;
- Your letter of support from your collaborative partner (if your application has a collaborative element);
- Your proposed primary supervisor's statement; and,
- Your two references.

E. SELECTION PROCESS, NOTIFICATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF AWARDS

Applications made to SeNSS will go through a number of selection processes. Your application will be assessed firstly at institutional level (at your chosen university) and, if successful, it will be put forward for consideration by a panel of experts in your discipline. Finally, the SeNSS Management Board will discuss and approve the final studentship awards.

You will be advised at each step in this process whether or not you have been successful at that particular stage. If your application is short-listed for discussion at the SeNSS Management Board phase, you will be advised by email by the beginning of April 2018 whether or not you have been awarded a studentship.

If you are offered a SeNSS studentship, you will receive a congratulatory email. This email will note that you will receive a formal offer letter, which will indicate the deadline by which you must accept your offer of a studentship. Please reply promptly if you are offered a SeNSS studentship. You may either respond using email or, if you wish to respond by post, we recommended that you use a recorded or signed for mail delivery service.

Should you be offered a SeNSS studentship, your acceptance of this award constitutes an agreement between you and your SeNSS university, as set out in your offer letter.

However, please note that, in our experience, some students who are offered studentships may turn down their offers, if they decide to study elsewhere, or decide not to study at all. If this is the case, then some reserve candidates may receive offers later on. If you are not successful in the first instance, but are placed on a reserve list, you will be informed of this.

F. THE SeNSS STUDENT-LED STUDENTSHIP COMPETITION SELECTION CRITERIA

The following three categories of criteria, outlined below, will be used to assess applications across all pathways and degree formats. **Please note that all 4-year award applications (which include 1+3, 2+2 and +4 structures of study) will be assessed in a way that recognises that someone applying for a 4-year studentship has had less training and fewer opportunities to think about and to research their proposed research project than someone applying for a +3 studentship. In other words, the way in which the selection process is carried out will ensure that those applying for 4-year awards will not be disadvantaged relative to +3 applicants.**

Evidence of the quality and feasibility of the proposal (40%) – This will be based on your account 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. The SeNSS assessors will be looking for evidence of your ability to articulate a research project, a coherent and well thought-out plan for doctoral study, a good awareness of the place of your research within the current field, and potential impact. Reference will be made to your personal statement, as contained in your application, as well as your supervisor's supporting statement.

Evidence that you are well-prepared for your proposed research and future career (40%) – This will be based on your description of how your previous experience (academic and professional) has prepared you for postgraduate study and research, your referees' evaluation of your suitability for postgraduate research and your research project (this will be done through considering evidence both you and your referees have provided about: a) your performance at undergraduate and postgraduate level (if relevant); b) any relevant professional experience you have); and c) your description of how the programme will contribute to your long-term career aims. Reference will be made to the degree transcripts, individual module marks and degree results you have provided. Reference will also be made to your professional experience, particularly where you either do not have a strong academic background, or where you do not have a recent academic background. Reference will also be made to your supervisor's supporting statement, as well as your references.

Evidence of the suitability of the proposed supervision and training (20%) – This will take into account the expertise and relevance of your proposed supervisors' research areas in relation to your proposed research project, the individual roles of the proposed supervisory team, how the particular knowledge and expertise of your proposed supervisors will work synergistically to enhance your project, and the training needs you have listed and how they are envisioned to supplement your research. In evaluating this, reference will primarily be made to the information provided by your proposed primary supervisor which, in turn, will also reflect on the expertise brought to your project by the second supervisor.

G. SeNSS UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS: WHO TO CONTACT

If you have any queries about either applying for a place to study, or about applying for a SeNSS studentship, please contact the administrator at your chosen SeNSS university in the first instance:

- **City, University London:** Dr Claudia Kalay: claudia.kalay1@city.ac.uk; researchsupport@city.ac.uk
- **University of East Anglia:** Mel Steele: m.steele@uea.ac.uk; senss.dtp@uea.ac.uk
- **University of Essex:** Laura Ruddick: laura@essex.ac.uk
- **Goldsmiths, University of London:** Chris Robson: c.robson@gold.ac.uk; graduateschool@gold.ac.uk
- **University of Kent:** Rosalind Beeching: c.r.beeching@kent.ac.uk; graduateschool@kent.ac.uk
- **Reading University:** Joanna John: j.john@reading.ac.uk; esrcdtp@reading.ac.uk
- **Roehampton University:** Fiona Eddleston: fiona.eddleston@roehampton.ac.uk; SeNSS@roehampton.ac.uk
- **Royal Holloway, University of London:** Jane Gawthrope: jane.gawthrope@rhul.ac.uk; esrcdtp@rhul.ac.uk
- **University of Surrey:** Shane Dowle: s.dowle@surrey.ac.uk; studentships@southeastdtc.ac.uk
- **University of Sussex:** Shelley Jenkins: s.l.jenkins@sussex.ac.uk; esrcdt@sussex.ac.uk