Applicant Guidance Notes

AHRC Doctoral Landscape Awards Applications

2027 entry

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These guidance notes are designed to help you make your application and lead you through the process so please read thoroughly.

Eligibility and application process

AHRC funds outstanding original research across the whole range of the arts and humanities. We welcome applications for interdisciplinary and practice research. We encourage applications from people from all backgrounds and identities, to avoid perpetuating biases in arts and humanities research.

Applications are eligible where the applicant:

- Is a UK/Home student with a Masters (or currently studying for a Masters)
- Is a UK/Home student without a Masters but with equivalent relevant professional and / or creative experience
- Is an International student with a Masters (or currently studying for a Masters)
- Is an International student without a Masters but with equivalent relevant professional and / or creative experience
- Does not already hold a doctoral degree
- Is not already enrolled on a doctoral degree.

Awards cover:
- a full tuition waiver for Home or International students, for full-time or part-time study;

- a stipend at the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) rate for 3.5 years full-time or 7 years part-time study (thesis submission is required at the end of the funded period for both full and part-time candidates);

- potential to apply for further funding to support related research activities and events.

Please also note that following AHRC guidelines, we are only able to offer 30% of Doctoral Landscape Awards to international applicants.

UKRI (AHRC) funding will not cover other costs which are associated with entering the UK such as visas, flights and the NHS surcharge.

Additional eligibility points

1. If you are currently employed as a member of academic staff at De Montfort University (DMU), then you are ineligible to apply for funding from the Doctoral Landscape Awards. Staff at other universities are eligible to apply for a part-time studentship. However, the award would still be subject to the standard terms and

conditions attached to a part-time studentship, for instance, with regard to hours worked, and the proposed PhD must be distinct from the work that the person is contracted to do at the institution. If these circumstances apply to you, please contact the DMU Doctoral Landscape Award Lead (Dr Alissa Clarke: a.clarke@dmu.ac.uk) for further guidance before beginning your application.

2. Employment: If you are currently employed full-time and intend to remain employed full-time whilst undertaking your PhD studies, you will be ineligible to apply for funding. You must make your employment position clear on the application form. Employment for part-time students should not exceed more than 20 hours in any week, and for full-time students should not exceed more than 6 hours in any week.

3. If a Doctoral Landscape Award student takes up a salaried full-time position, AHRC funding will not continue (even for part-time study). If employment is for a fixed short-term appointment, it may be possible to take a leave of absence from AHRC-funded PhD study and suspend the studentship for the relevant period.

4. Regulations under place of tenure set by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) recommend that you live within a reasonable distance of your designated home institution so that you can meet necessary travel costs. This is to ensure that you are not isolated and get the full support, mentoring, training and access to the facilities you will need to complete your research successfully and to a high standard. The only exceptions to this are periods of absence that are an essential part of your study, e.g. fieldwork, study visits or conference attendance, or when on annual leave from your PhD. These criteria mean that we are **unable to support distance learning PhDs**; furthermore, UKRI regulations are clear that international students funded by UKRI councils must be primarily resident in the UK for the duration of their study.

You are only allowed to submit ONE application to the Doctoral Landscape Awards.

AHRC Subject Remit, ESRC Overlap and Interdisciplinary Proposals

All project proposals *must* be aligned with the Arts and Humanities Research Council subject remit.

Applicants whose projects come close to the border between Arts and Humanities Research Council Funding and Economic and Social Research Council funding (particularly those in Architecture, Geography, Law, Politics, Media, Communications and Cultural Studies, Cultural Policy and Management, Technology Studies, Sociology, Criminology, Development and Linguistics) should check with their academic unit and with the Doctoral Landscape Award Lead that their project falls under the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council). Applicants are encouraged to carefully consult the Remit, programmes and priorities – AHRC – UKRI, as well as the AHRC-ESRC Joint Statement.

Whilst we welcome interdisciplinary proposals, applicants must be aware that at least 50% of their project must focus on one of the AHRC's primary research areas.

Practice Research

The Doctoral Landscape Awards support practice research. In these guidelines 'practice research' is used for consistency, however we recognise that a variety of other nomenclatures are preferred in specific disciplines including practice-led, practice-based and practice-as - research and that these alternative terms are equally valid. In all its forms, practice research is a process of investigation in order to gain new knowledge and original insights by a practitioner-researcher in which creative output can be produced or practice undertaken as an integral part of the research process and which is then disseminated in an appropriate form to the fields/ communities who benefit from such knowledge. Indicative examples include research undertaken through artwork, exhibitions, compositions, performances, events, creative writing, design, textiles, film, or digital interactive media. In line with AHRC's guidelines and DMU's Research Degree and Higher Doctorate Regulations, we expect this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or exposition to support its position and to demonstrate critical reflection.

The application process

Please ensure that you allow yourself enough time to complete your funding application form and have secured the submission of your references by the first stage application deadline **11.59pm (UK time), Wednesday 3rd February 2027** for entry in October 2027. To aid with time zone conversion of the deadline, please see the below link:

World clock converter

Awards cannot be deferred other than in exceptional circumstances.

There are four potential steps to the application process:

- **Step one**: Identify a supervisor(s);
- **Step two**: Apply for a place to study at DMU and submit your first stage application for the Doctoral Landscape Awards (3rd February 2027, 11.59pm);
- **Step three**: Following a shortlisting process, you may be invited to further develop your application, aided by feedback, and to resubmit it by the 8th March 2027, 11.59pm (this is the second stage application deadline);
- **Step four**: Following a further shortlisting process, you may be invited to interview and to submit a short, pre-recorded presentation (5 minutes in length) reflecting on your **preparedness** for this PhD project via academic, creative and/or professional experience (March - April 2027).

This guidance document is particularly focused on stages one and two. Further guidance will be provided following each shortlisting process.

Step one: Identify a supervisor(s)

We welcome applications from suitably qualified Home or International applicants for outstanding research projects. These self-directed projects can be conducted through more traditional methods, creative methods or via practice research. These projects should connect with **one of the six themes** deriving from the research and innovation institutes in the Faculty of Technology, Arts and Culture:

- **Migration, Integration and Conflict** (Institute of Global Challenges and Cultures)
- **Global Cultures: Material, Textual and Visual** (Institute of Global Challenges and Cultures)
- **Creative Practices and their Histories** (Institute of Arts, Design and Performance)
- **Circular Design** (Institute of Arts, Design and Performance)
- **Creativity, Media and Social Responsibility** (Digital Future Institute)
- **Building for a Greener Future for all** (Institute for Sustainable Futures)

We would strongly encourage you to begin by approaching prospective supervisors at DMU aligned with the themes above and with your research interests, so that you can develop your project proposal and application in supportive dialogue with those supervisors. You can have two or three supervisors. Alongside investigating the links to the themes above, check out our Blog on how to find a supervisor and our handy findasupervisor tool. These will help you identify individuals, groups and institutes in your research area(s). Staff profiles on websites will often feature a potential supervisor's current research interests, their previous and upcoming publications, practice research and activities, and a list of their previously supervised doctoral researchers and projects. This information can help you assess their suitability to support your research.

Once you have identified a potential supervisor, you should write them a brief email introducing yourself and enquire about discussing the ideas and focus of your prospective PhD research. During your discussions with the prospective supervisor(s), you should ask them specific questions about your project. Your potential supervisor(s) can help you refine your project for your DLA application and may be able to provide examples of sample funded applications where they have permission to do so.

It's important to think about the other academics in the university department, the PhD students that are already based there, available facilities and the research networks the department is host to or part of. This information can usually be found on a university department's website and will help you assess how a department will fit with your developing research interests. It may also be possible to reach out to current and past PhD students in the department, to ask about the research culture and perhaps get an idea of what it is like working with your proposed supervisor(s).

At least one person on the supervision team should be a member or an associate member of one of the four research and innovation institutes in the Faculty of Technology, Arts and Culture: Institute of Global Challenges and Cultures, Institute of Arts, Design and Performance, Digital Future Institute, Institute for Sustainable Futures.

Whilst this isn't guaranteed, it may be possible to have a second or third supervisor from one or more of the AHRC East and West Midlands Hub for Excellence in PGR Education partner universities:

- University of Nottingham (Hub Lead);
- Birmingham City University;
- Coventry University
- University of Birmingham
- University of Leicester
- University of Warwick

It is important to make early contact with potential supervisors. We would recommend contacting potential supervisors by early December at the latest, in order to submit your application for the first stage of the process (**3rd February 2027**) with their full support.

Step two: Apply for a place to study at DMU and submit your first stage application for the Doctoral Landscape Awards

Please be advised that international applicants will need to comply with DMU's eligibility requirements for fee status, visa, and English language proficiency.

In order to apply for a place to study at DMU and to submit your first stage application for the Doctoral Landscape Awards, you will need to upload these documents to De Montfort University's (DMU's) Doctoral College PhD admissions portal (**Admissions Portal**):

- **A fully completed Doctoral Landscape Award Application form**.
- **Two References (at least one academic) on DMU Doctoral Landscape Award Reference Forms** (these can also be sent directly by referees to pgradmissions@dmu.ac.uk). Please ensure you have read the guidance for referees later in this form.
- **Copies of Higher Education Qualifications (certificates and transcripts).**
- **A scan of your passport photo page.**
- **English language proof of proficiency** (where necessary).

You will also need to complete the form and annex page on the admissions portal.

All of this must be submitted for the first-stage application deadline of 11.59pm (UK time) on Wednesday the 3rd February 2027.

Incomplete applications, or applications received after this deadline, will not be considered.

The admissions portal collects data regarding protected characteristics. It does so for two reasons: firstly, to enable DMU to process your application, and secondly to allow DMU to measure its success in attracting candidates to the Doctoral Landscape Awards with a wide range of backgrounds and experience, and to ensure that it provides appropriate support for those candidates. **This information is not part of the assessment process**. The Equality and Diversity data is separated from the application before assessment, then it is aggregated and held anonymously. It is not shared with anyone prior to the making of awards. It is reported as aggregated data to the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Application Writing Workshop

We offer an online Application Writing Workshop on Saturday the 12th December between 11am – 1.30pm. This workshop will provide advice on the application process, discussion of examples of previous successful funded applications and a chance for you to ask questions. We strongly recommend that you participate in this workshop if possible.

Completing the DMU Doctoral Landscape Award Application Form

You should aim to make the best case possible for your doctoral application, proof-read before submission to avoid careless spelling or grammatical errors and pay due attention to the word limits where applicable. If you have a disability which will make completing the application form difficult, please contact the DMU Doctoral Landscape Award lead for guidance. How you present your project proposal is crucial, so you should use clear and concise language, avoiding jargon. You should not assume that your audience will be specialists in your field, but rather familiar with the basic demands of your discipline and doctoral study.

Use of AI UKRI policy – applicant responsibilities

- Any generative AI that creates sentences from scratch, predicts sentence formation or substantively rewrites sentences (such as Grammarly's Generative AI writing feature, sometimes referred to as GrammarlyGO, Wordtune, Paperpal), is not permitted. Applicants may use AI tools to brainstorm ideas, summarise texts for your own comprehension, understand difficult concepts, plan/structure or to help find relevant academic sources.
- Note: No content generated through AI tools should EVER be taken at face value without verification with other reliable sources.
- For more details see: artificial-intelligence-in-application-and-assessment-policy/use-of-generative-artificial-intelligence-in-application-preparation-and-assessment/

All applications are assessed by the same scoring criteria which can be downloaded from the DMU Doctoral Landscape Award web page.

Please follow the guidance below carefully. This is the main document by which your application will be assessed, and if you omit any of the information requested, or provide information not appropriate to the question asked, or do not follow the guidance in other ways, it will affect the assessment of your application.

Please do not include any weblinks in your responses.

The Application Form

Download The Doctoral Landscape Award Funding Application Form from the DMU Doctoral Landscape Award web page.

The Doctoral Landscape Award Funding Application Form must be completed and uploaded to the DMU Doctoral College online admissions portal prior to submitting your application. The guidance detailed below is intended to support you through each of the sections found on the Doctoral Landscape Award Funding Application.

Applicant Details

Please supply your full name with your application and an email address for correspondence.

Eligibility

This section confirms your eligibility for application. If you already hold a doctoral level degree, or have commenced PhD study, you are not eligible for Doctoral Landscape Award funding.

Status

Please choose your mode of study. Full time students will be registered for a maximum of 3.5 years of study and receive 3.5 years of funding; part-time students will receive the same total amount of funding over 7 years of registration. Please note that in both cases, you will be a campus-based student.

Employment: If you are currently employed full-time and intend to remain employed full-time whilst undertaking your PhD studies, you will be ineligible to apply for funding. You must make your employment position clear on the application form. Employment for part-time students should not exceed more than 20 hours in any week, and for full-time students should not exceed more than 6 hours in any week; international students must also check the limits on paid employment detailed in their visas.

Please indicate whether you are applying as a Home or an International student. If you are uncertain about your status, please check with the DMU Doctoral College: researchstudents@dmu.ac.uk

Your Proposed Project

Project Title:
Please give your research project a title. This should be a short title that describes the research to be undertaken and should be a single sentence. Try to avoid writing a question as a working title.

It is strongly recommended that you seek feedback from your prospective supervisory team on this application. Please confirm that you have been in contact with your prospective supervision team about this application.

Project Proposal [max. 500 words]:
A well-conceived project is the cornerstone of a successful application. We are looking for innovative, exciting and original research projects, and we welcome applications for interdisciplinary and practice research as well as distinctive contributions to a discipline.

Bear in mind that some of the assessors may not work precisely in your particular discipline but that all of them will be able to assess whether a project is coherent and clearly explained and can be realised within the timeframe of your studies. As part of your proposal, make clear the contribution to knowledge and understanding that you hope to make and explain why the research is important. You will be addressing an audience with academic expertise in the arts and humanities, but not necessarily specialists in the precise area of the project: it is your responsibility to make sure the project is expressed clearly for that audience.

In describing your project in no more than 500 words you will be expected to encompass a number of things. How you balance the weight and priority given to these different elements in the word count will depend on the nature of your project.

- The **context** of your project (i.e., the research or practice background to the problem/challenge/research gap you will investigate).

Please situate your project in relation to a research context. This means to explain why this research is needed and acknowledge previous work in the field (if any exists). Outline your project as relevant to the stage of your research at the time of applying. Support these points with reference (e.g., Jones, 2017) to existing literature and, if relevant, to practice in the field or fields of study.

- The **research question**(s) it will answer.

What is the question animating your research's focus? What questions are motivating you to conduct and complete your research? Why must these questions be answered right now? Think about how your research may be staging an intervention in the research area(s) you are drawing on and what questions are raised by the 'gaps' in your field(s). Think, too, about what questions are raised by the intersection of your research and wider society? You might have a single research question, two or three questions, or an overall challenge with several underpinning objectives.

- The **method(s)** you will use to investigate your research question(s).

Describe your intended methods and try to be as specific as you can at this stage. We want you to outline *how* you will undertake the research. For example, what is your object of study and how will you gather data or generate insights about it? Is there a particular approach you will take with your creative practice? Will your research focus on a specific geographical location? Will you be undertaking field work, archival research, qualitative interviews, theorisation or other methods? You should ensure you have a good grasp of the processes of those methodologies: for instance, oral history requires some thought around participant selection, both practical and ethical.

- The **impact(s)** your project could make in terms of an original contribution to knowledge in the field(s), and beyond academia (e.g., in professional and creative practice, industry, etc).

Please state how you see that your research project might have impact, in other words the "so what" of doing the research, why does your research matter? Whilst this will necessarily be a short statement, in preparing it you might find it helpful to think about these questions. What changes will be made within your discipline(s) on account of your original research and practical contributions? How will you work with organisations in and out of academia, education, research centres, conferences? Why are these organisations of particular interest to you? What forms of public engagement and dissemination best fit with your research? What are the practical uses of your project? How and why are these the best uses of your project?

Project references [max 250 words]
Please provide references for all primary and secondary resources mentioned in your project proposal. These may include exhibitions, performances, artworks, as appropriate. This will help assessors locate your project in current work. You must include enough information in your reference for the work cited to be located by another person. However, you may omit the place of publication and publishing house from the citations of books, and where an essay or article has multiple authors, you may use the lead author and abbreviate the others to 'et al.'

Indicative structure and time-line [max. 200 words]
You should outline the planned progression of the research and/or practice over the 3.5 years (FT) or 7 years (PT) of the project to submission, suggesting the main focus of your activity in specific periods and any milestones, e.g. phases of fieldwork, practice or research visits, partner collaborations, completion of chapter drafts or practical outputs, and

engagement with training. We are looking to see that you understand the feasibility of your research and have the potential to project manage your PhD.

Ethics [max 200 words]:
All research projects must comply with DMU's research ethics and integrity guidelines. Please review your project proposal against these requirements. Everyone is bound by the requirements of **academic honesty and integrity**; other projects may have more particular ethical implications. It is important to address ethical issues early in your research, and this is a good opportunity to start thinking about them. The most common issue in arts and humanities research is the collection of data, particularly, although not exclusively, about people still alive. If this applies to your project, how will you collect data, how will you ensure that your subjects have given their consent, and how you will you store the data you collect? You might also have issues around intellectual property particularly if your project involves close collaboration with a partner. Depending on your research topic, you might not have any specific ethical concerns, but if you do, in this box you must outline:

- **The specific ethical considerations** of your project: these may be material (e.g. copyright and intellectual property, data storage) or methodological (data collection, engagement of research participants/stakeholders);
- How you will **address ethical concerns** you have identified (e.g., informed consent, anonymisation, appropriate training, identification of support services etc.)

Please note, however, that you should not simply repeat or cut and paste what you find in your institution's guidance, but be as specific as possible to your proposal.

Off-site Practice/ Fieldwork/Study Visits [max 200 words]:
Many projects will require primary research activities, such as visits to a particular archive or archives, or to a museum or gallery collection, or the completion of data collection, or a piece of fieldwork, or practice or performance. One of the measures of an excellent project and its management is your ability to think through which activities you will need to complete, when and how you will undertake them. We are not looking for numerical figures but the types of costs that are likely to be incurred. If your proposed project will require practice, fieldwork or study visits (beyond the use of DMU's facilities and routine dissemination and engagement, such as presenting at conferences), then you must complete this section. Please be aware, this application will serve as a reference point for additional funding. Activities identified here must be **essential** to the completion of your project. Their significance to the project must be evident to the assessors of your application. Activities not mentioned here but which are later identified as important to your research may not be funded.

Doctoral Landscape Awards bursary holders can apply for Research Training Support Grant funding to enable such activities. However, there is a cap on the total amount of funding to which an award holder can apply. Therefore, it's worth also considering how these activities could be conducted in the most economic fashion.

For each activity detailed on the form, you should provide indicative information on:

- **Where** the activity will take place (will you have to travel, which museums, archives, libraries, sites will you visit, will you need to hire space?)
- **How** long will the activity last or how long will it take to accomplish the visit will be for (i.e., days, weeks)
- **Why** is the activity necessary to your project (i.e., how will the visit support you to complete your research? e.g., enable data collection, stakeholder engagement, language practice etc).
- **What type** of costs are likely to be incurred (e.g. travel and accommodation; participant costs; equipment hire).
- **Contingency plans** in the event that visits cannot go ahead due to risk assessment outcomes (e.g., restrictions due to COVID-19).

Extended Funding (max. 200 words)
A standard award is for 3.5 years full-time. An award can be extended up to a **maximum of 3 months**. Requests for extended funding can be made where there is a rationale for complex or extended training, skills acquisition (e.g., research cannot be completed without acquisition of new, high-level skills), extended research/fieldwork/extended practice activities, visits, or extended practice or placement needs (e.g., due to significant challenges with collaboration, access and/or logistics). Please see application guidelines for further details. All such requests **must** make a case for the need and explain how it is **integral** to your research. Complete this section if you anticipate that you will require extended funding.

Please provide details of the:
training/skills development, **operational challenges** or **extended practice activities** you anticipate.

Include planned **destinations and purpose** of visits for fieldwork or placements.
and **indicative length** of additional time you will require.

Extended funding can be applied for during the PhD after the Probation Review (after 9 months for full-time study, after 18 months part-time study). Please be aware that this original DLA application will serve as a reference point for future extended funding requests. Activities not mentioned here, but which are later identified as important to your research will be scrutinised.

Preparedness

Qualifications:
In this section, you are asked to provide details about your academic qualifications, both your undergraduate degree and, if applicable, your postgraduate degree. The AHRC requires a good undergraduate degree award as a minimum; DMU also recognises that professional

qualifications and experience may provide the equivalent preparation to a Masters qualification.

In order to support our inclusive approach to applications, please DO NOT include details of your degree-awarding institution in your answers.

Your undergraduate degree is usually a first degree, resulting in a BA. If you are an international applicant, and do not know the equivalent British degree or classification, please check with DMU Doctoral College, who should be able to provide the necessary equivalence.

Should you hold or be studying for a post-graduate degree, this will normally be at Masters level. You may apply for Doctoral Landscape Award funding while you are studying for a Masters; if that is your situation, please put 'pending' under 'classification', and the date when you expect to finish under completion. If you are in this position, please be aware that completing your postgraduate degree will be a condition of your award.

If you do not hold a Masters' degree nor are studying for one, but have equivalent professional experience, please provide full details of this experience in the next question.

If you are an international applicant, please consult with the DMU Doctoral College Admissions Office in your Home Institution to establish the British equivalencies for your degree results. This will help the assessors understand your achievements correctly.

Describe how you are ready to undertake your proposed doctoral research project based on your previous study and experience? [max. 500 words]:
In this question you should demonstrate your **preparedness**, what makes you the best person to undertake this research project and what you will bring to it. This is your opportunity to present yourself and your **particular abilities and skills**, so take time to think through how what you include is significant to how you will undertake your doctoral study. You should comment on your **knowledge and skills,** whether you have developed those through previous study in higher education (including specific modules if appropriate), through **other courses and training** (perhaps in a professional context) or **professional experience and creative practice** (for instance, employment, residencies, curations, internships, exhibiting, and performances). You might mention any **specialised training you have completed, both academic and professional**, such as languages, information technology and specific software packages used in your project, or equality, diversity and inclusion training. You should also note **academic and professional achievements**, such as awards and prizes, scholarships, publications, exhibitions, key collaborations, significant performance opportunities.

It is also important to remember that while not all those looking at your application will be expert in precisely your area, they will be experienced in assessing your fit for the project you have described. You might also reflect on the skills you think **you will need but which you do not yet have:** for instance, advanced knowledge of a language, or experience with a particular software package. If this is the case, you might mention it as a training need here,

to demonstrate that you understand the demands of your project and how you will address them.

In order to support our inclusive approach to applications, please do not include web addresses or refer the panelists who will be assessing your application to external information sites in this section. All the necessary information should be contained within the word count.

Anything else you would like to bring to the attention of the panel? [max. 150 words]:
In this section if you wish, you may mention any circumstances or other experience that you would like to bring to the attention of the panel, **specifically** where the circumstances have negatively affected your academic results, and where you have not received mitigation. There is no requirement to disclose such circumstances if you do not wish to, or you do not think that you have any to disclose. If you do not wish to disclose, please make sure that your referees and the interviewing panel are aware of your wish.

If there is something you would like the panel to know, please present it as concisely as possible, with a rough date. For instance, "2023, diagnosis of dyslexia during final year of study. Mitigation as the result of diagnosis improved but degree average predominantly calculated on previous grades". You should **ONLY** supply information here which has impacted your studies or professional achievements.

Place

Proposed supervisory team:
Your supervisory team should include at least two people. Your lead supervisor must come from DMU, as your home institution, but it may be possible to have a second or third supervisor from one or more of the AHRC East and West Midlands Hub's partner universities. You may also draw on the skills or insights of someone from DMU or another institution in the light touch role of an advisor.

Your PhD may involve engaging with an industry partner in some way. Please provide brief details here of that partnership. At the first stage of application, the inclusion of that partner organisation may be in process, so that you tick 'no' next to the box asking whether they are aware of their involvement in your proposed research. However, if you move forward to the second stage of application and revise your application, the expectation would be that you would then be able to tick 'yes' in that box.

Research Theme Priorities:

Your research project should connect with one of the six themes deriving from the research and innovation institutes in the Faculty of Technology, Arts and Culture. Please indicate the primary theme with which it is connected. If you feel that your project has a secondary connection with one of the themes, then please indicate this in the next box.

Describe how DMU provides a suitable environment for both the progress of your project and your academic/professional development [max 300 words]:

It is important that you have actively chosen your institution, because the right fit between institution and project makes a huge difference to the project's success. In this question, you're asked to explain the academic reasons why you've chosen DMU. There are three main areas you might want to discuss. Firstly, most importantly, you might want to explain why your supervision team are t**he best people to support you** in your project. Secondly, you should look at the other **networks** available. For instance, does your home institution have a particular **research strength in your disciplinary area**, which means you would be able to participate in broader research discussions and as part of research and innovation institutes and research groups? Do consider your **project's connection with the research theme/s** as part of this. Or is there methodological **expertise and resources**, which might underpin specialist training that you know you will need? Or are there particular **facilities** that you would use? These might include an archive, or performance or practice space. And finally, you might also think about what your institution offers to post-graduate researchers more generally: is there **good training provision and support**? Will there be opportunities to gain career experience?

If you are drawing on the expertise of individuals at one of the East and West Midlands Hub partner institutions as a supervisor or advisor to your PhD, then you may wish to highlight the benefits that you will also draw from their context and contacts.

References

To support your application to the Doctoral Landscape Awards, it is essential that two references on the DMU DLA reference forms are received by DMU by the deadline of **3rd February 2027 (11.59pm, UK time).** To aid with time zone conversion of the deadline, please see the below link:

World clock converter

These references can be emailed directly to the Doctoral College via pgradmissions@dmu.ac.uk or can be uploaded by you to the Doctoral College PhD Admissions Portal (**Admissions Portal**).

Please be aware that late references will not be accepted, and your application will be ruled as ineligible.

Your referee is only required to complete the DLA reference forms. These will be used by the Doctoral College Admissions Office at DMU and in support of your funding application.

Please make sure that:

- Your referees understand that they will be expected to include answers to each of the questions on the form.

- Your referees understand that they should not provide details of your degree awarding institution when discussing you on the form (in the 'Reference Details' section).

Time frame

We recommend that you contact your referees in soon as possible and be clear about the importance of the deadline date. Do be aware that many colleagues will be unavailable across the winter break. **Please allow enough time for your referees to complete their reference.**

Selecting a referee

The M4C reference form is short and consists of four questions:

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. Are you the prospective PhD Supervisor?

3. How long have you known the applicant?

4. How well prepared is the applicant to undertake and complete this project?

The referee is asked to justify their response to the fourth question with a short text response (max. 250 words).

Completing the reference form should not be an onerous process, but it is essential that you select referees who have the detailed knowledge required to appraise your recent intellectual, creative and/or professional development as well as your preparedness for the PhD project. In references, panels will be looking for evidence of at least some of the following: a good knowledge base of your chosen field (this can be academic, creative/professional or it can be experiential); ability to complete an extended project or piece of work; relevant skills; potential to produce innovative and substantive contribution to discipline This list is not exhaustive – you may have other qualities that your referee wishes to highlight – but it is essential that your references support your potential as a research student.

Top tips

- Discuss your project with your potential referee. Please ensure that your referee understands that you are applying to highly competitive funding scheme and not just for a place to study.

- Establish timeframes: are they able to provide the reference to enable you to submit your application by the deadline?

- Share the reference form and details above with your referee in advance so they know what is expected of them.

- **Only** ask a potential supervisor to be your referee if that person has **already taught you** (ideally at Masters rather than undergraduate levels), knows your academic record, and can comment on the proposed PhD research.

- If a potential supervisor has **not** taught you before and can only comment on the PhD research proposal that you have shared with them, they should **not** be a referee.

- Applicants who have not been in education for a period of time may choose to select a referee who is, for example, an employer, or a collaborator, in the creative industries. In this case, you should ensure that referees are aware that they will need to comment on you as a person and professional.

- For further support on choosing and corresponding with your referees, we recommend you speak to your prospective supervisor and/or the DLA Lead.

What happens next

First stage applications are reviewed by an academic panel, who will shortlist candidates in their academic unit, using the 3 Ps (project, preparedness and place). Applicants who are not shortlisted will be informed by the university at this stage.

The shortlisted candidates will then be supported to further develop their applications by their supervisors and via feedback stemming from the panel and from the Doctoral Landscape Award Lead. These candidates will submit a second stage application by 11.59pm (UK time) on the 8th of March.

These second stage applications will be reviewed by a Unit of Assessment Panel using the 3 Ps (project, preparedness and place). Only applications which are scored at the very top of the scale (between 5.25 - 6) will be shortlisted.

Applicants who are not shortlisted will be informed by the university at this stage.

Candidates shortlisted will be invited to interview with a panel, and to submit a 5-minute pre-recorded presentation reflecting on their preparedness for this PhD project via

academic, creative and/or professional experience. This will take place across March - April. These candidates will also be invited to attend an online interview tips and advice workshop prior to their interview. A Faculty Decision Form will be completed by the interview panel, assessing the interview and pre-recorded presentation using the 3 Ps.

Following these processes, the Awarding Committee Panellists will meet in April to determine which candidates will be awarded a Doctoral Landscape Award, and a reserve list will be drawn up. Applicants will be informed of the outcome by mid-May.