Doctoral Landscape Awards Scoring Criteria

Eligibility

Applications are eligible where the applicant is:

- A UK student with a Masters (or currently studying for a Masters)
- An international student with a Masters (or currently studying for a Masters)
- A UK or an international student without a Masters but with equivalent professional experience
- Do not already hold a doctoral degree.
- Are not already enrolled on a doctoral degree programme.

AHRC Subject Remit, ESRC Overlap and Interdisciplinary Proposals

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 Criteria for a Doctoral Landscape Award application.

All applications for Doctoral Landscape Award funding are subject to the same criteria for scoring. These are based on three 'P's: **Project, Preparedness, and Place.** Scores are awarded on:

- the evidence of the application form, where the applicant puts forward their case;
- on the references, where referees are invited to comment on the applicant's preparedness for doctoral study;
- and on the Faculty Decision Form, where the Unit of Assessment addresses how all three criteria are met across the interview and pre-recorded presentation process.

Each of the three criteria will be scored on a **scale of 1–6**, with 6 being the highest. The overall score for an application will be calculated as the **average of these three scores**, giving a final result out of six. This ensures that no single criterion disproportionately determines the outcome and allows applicants to demonstrate excellence across a range of areas.

The criteria below should be used by:

- **Applicants:** to ensure that they provide the necessary information for shortlisting and scoring.
- **Academic units and Units of Assessments:** to support applicants in completing their applications, and to shortlist the very best applications.
- **Awarding Committee Panellists:** to ensure consistency in assessment and scoring when making the final awards.

Project

A well-thought-through project is essential to a successful application. It should address the following questions: is the project focused? Is it feasible to complete it within the funding period? Are the research questions clear to a non-specialist as well as to a disciplinary expert? Will the research methodology address the research questions? Is the project clearly informed by current thinking in the field, both in its questions and in its methodology?

What makes the project stand out? Does it bring a new methodology or perspective to an old question? Does it address a new question? Is it clear what difference the project will make? How will it affect current understanding? Is it building on previous work or is it challenging assumptions? Why is it timely and important? Are there references to help contextualise the topic?

An understanding of the research process and the final output is also important, and is addressed in the timeline for study. Crucial questions here include: Can the project be completed within the timeframe of the award? What stages of work will have to be completed and in what order to address the questions?

In short, **what is this project going to address and why is it important that it should be addressed?**

Preparedness

This section considers the applicant's overall readiness to undertake doctoral research, bringing together evidence of prior academic achievement, professional or creative experience, skills, and motivation. Applicants should demonstrate how their previous studies, research experience, or practice have equipped them with the knowledge and capabilities needed to complete their proposed project. Academic preparation, including degree classification and performance in research projects, should be presented as part of this overall picture, alongside professional experience, creative outputs, or other relevant achievements that have prepared the applicant to work at doctoral level.

Applicants should also indicate what further skills, knowledge, or training they will need in order to carry out the project successfully, and how they intend to acquire them. These might include, for example, language training, digital methods, technical or creative techniques, or specific methodological competencies. Evidence of commitment, independence, and the capacity to contribute new knowledge to their field should also be made clear.

Preparedness is understood holistically, valuing both academic and non-traditional routes into research. Academic results are considered as one element of readiness rather than the sole determinant of potential.

The key questions for this section are: **how is this applicant prepared — through experience, skills, and motivation — to undertake this project? What further skills and expertise will the applicant need to undertake their project?**

Place

This section addresses how the proposed project will benefit from the research expertise of the chosen supervisory team and the home institution. The applicant should reflect on why they have chosen their home institution and their lead supervisor, and what they think their supervisory team will offer them in academic and/or practice expertise. Moreover, how will the applicant and their project connect with one or more of the six research themes deriving from the research and innovation institutes in the Faculty of Technology, Arts and Culture? In addition, does the applicant know of any research groups/networks in their home institution that will support and develop their work? Are there any relevant opportunities to collaborate with non-university partners for the benefit the applicant and project? Is there the potential to work with individuals and groups beyond higher education, such as artists, activists, community groups? Applicants will provide outline answers to these questions.

The key question for this section is: **why is this the best place to undertake this project?**

Scoring

Each application is scored against the three criteria — **Project, Preparedness, and Place** — on a scale of 1 to 6. Each criterion is given an individual score, and the overall result is the average of the three scores, producing a final score out of six. This approach ensures that no single criterion disproportionately determines the outcome and allows applicants to demonstrate excellence across a range of areas.

The definitions of scores are as follows:

Score	Definition
6	**Outstanding Application and top priority for an award** A research proposal that is outstanding across the following: conceptualisation of questions, aims and objectives; scholarly, creative, or professional contextualisation; research design and methodology; potential for innovation and influence in academic and/or non-academic contexts; clarity of structure and expression. The articulation of the project indicates appropriate command of the field at this level. The intended contribution of the project to research, scholarship and/or practice may be additive or transformative but in all cases is clearly and persuasively stated. The candidate's preparedness to undertake research at doctoral level is demonstrated at an exceptionally high level, based on their previous academic/professional/creative record. Evidence may lie in outstanding academic results achieved or predicted, in outstanding professional or creative outputs or achievements realised or in secure progress, or a combination of these. Preparedness may be demonstrated through traditional or non-traditional routes leading into the research, but in all cases is coherent, compelling, and shows substantive relevant activity of exceptional quality, motivation, and purpose. The proposed supervisory team is exceptionally well-matched to the project. Their expertise and research experience are highly relevant and their track record demonstrates capacity to guide the project to successful and timely completion. The research environment, training provision, and resources offered by the institution are clearly of the highest quality and will enable the project to succeed.

	Information from referees may confirm and complement the applicant's own accounts of the quality of the application with regard to the preparedness of the applicant.
5	**Excellent Application and strong contender for an award** A research proposal that is excellent across almost all of the following: conceptualisation of questions, aims and objectives; scholarly, creative, or professional contextualisation; research design and methodology; potential for innovation and influence in academic and / or non-academic contexts; clarity of structure and expression. The articulation of the project suggests appropriate command of the field at this level. The intended contribution to research, scholarship, or practice is clearly indicated and likely to be significant, though not consistently at the level required for a 6. The candidate's preparedness to undertake doctoral research is of a high quality, based on their previous academic/creative/professional record. Academic results achieved or predicted, professional or creative outputs, and skills development demonstrate strong potential to succeed, with a credible plan for acquiring any further training required. The applicant's profile is strong, coherent and convincing, showing clear purpose and relevant experience, though not with the exceptional quality or consistency of a 6. The supervisory team and environment are well-suited to the project. There is clear evidence of appropriate expertise, relevant resources, and a supportive research culture that will provide a reliable basis for completion of the project. Information from referees may confirm and complement the applicant's own accounts of the quality of the application with regard to the preparedness of the applicant.

The remaining categories are included as a guide to help Unit of Assessment committees with the shortlisting processes, and to decide who should be sent forward for consideration to the Awarding Committee.

4	**Good application but requiring further development. It does not meet all criteria at a high enough level to be considered for an award.** A research proposal that demonstrates good standards in some but not all of the following: conceptualisation of questions, aims and objectives; scholarly, creative, or professional contextualisation; research design and methodology; clarity of structure and expression. Command of the field may be uneven or underdeveloped, and the project may require some refinement before it is fully convincing. The research merits support but the proposal requires further development in order to be convincing. The applicant's preparedness shows evidence of relevant academic, professional, or creative achievements but these may be uneven or incomplete. There may be gaps in skills or knowledge, or limited clarity in the plan for development. While there is potential to succeed, doubts may be raised about the applicant's readiness to undertake the project at the outset of the award. The proposed supervisory team and research environment are broadly suitable, but there may be some concerns about the fit or capacity to provide the training and resources needed for successful completion. Specific and reasonable data or detail from referees may cast doubt upon the applicant's own accounts of the quality of the application. Brief, generic, or understated support from referees should not in itself be interpreted as indicating a score of 4 unless corroborated by other insecure elements of the application.
3	**Satisfactory application but not recommended for an award** In the competitive context, the research proposal does not demonstrate sufficient originality, coherence, or rigour to be recommended for funding. The project may be vague in its aims, weakly contextualised, or lacking a robust methodology. The applicant's preparedness to undertake the project is not fully evidenced, and their previous academic / professional / creative record does not demonstrate consistent and appropriate quality. Academic results may be modest or incomplete, relevant professional or creative experience may be limited, and plans for acquiring further skills may be unclear or unrealistic. The overall profile does not convincingly demonstrate readiness for doctoral study. The fit between the project and supervisory environment may be partial or weak, and provision of resources or training may not appear adequate to support successful completion. Specific and reasonable data or detail from referees may cast doubt upon the quality of the application. Criticisms or reservations expressed by a referee or

	referees should not in isolation be interpreted as indicating a score of 3 unless corroborated by other flawed elements of the application.
2	**Poor application and not recommended for an award.** The application contains insufficient evidence and justification for support. There are noticeable gaps or flaws in one or more of the categories of project, preparedness, or place. The viability of the research project or the applicant's capacity to complete it successfully is seriously in doubt. Referees may express substantive reservations about the applicant's suitability for doctoral research or about the feasibility of the proposed project.
1	**Application not recommended for an award because of acute shortcomings** The application demonstrates serious weaknesses in one or more of the criterion of project, preparedness, or place, such that the panel cannot recommend funding. Evidence of the capacity of the academic unit(s) to support successful and timely completion of the proposed project may be absent or severely limited.
U	Application ungraded because it does not fall within the scope of the scheme.