

Guidance for Candidates

AHRC and FHASS Funding Awards

(September/October 2026 entry)

INTRODUCTION

This guidance is for candidates for two PhD funding competitions hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (FHASS) at Lancaster University. The first is the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Scholarship and the second is the FHASS Studentship.

Both awards follow an aligned application process meaning you can use the same application form and supporting documents to apply for one or both awards.

This guidance sets out the details of each awards, eligibility and the procedures for application.

The deadline for all funding applications is the 24th March 2026; no applications will be accepted after this time and any applications that remain incomplete after this time will be disqualified.

Please read these notes carefully before making your application. The sections are as follows:

1. AHRC SCHOLARSHIP – DETAILS

The AHRC provides funding to enable candidates to study at Lancaster University at the doctoral level. The postgraduate awards programme is administered as follows:

Either 3.5 years full time or part time funding *pro rata*

This scheme provides support for up to three and a half years of full-time study or part-time study *pro rata* for a programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree.

2. AHRC SCHOLARSHIP - ELIGIBILITY

Candidates need to be aware that the deadline to apply to the university for admission for a place on a PhD programme is 13th February 2026 at the latest.

You MUST have applied to your programme of study by this date or your funding application will not be eligible.

- Lancaster University is committed to working with candidates from underrepresented communities and those from non-traditional academic backgrounds. You will be able to demonstrate your talent and your experience on the application form, and your referees can also provide additional information that we might need to make our decision. For more information about our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), please visit our website: <http://www.nwcdtp.ac.uk/EDI>.
- Successful candidates typically have qualifications equivalent to a good honours degree (first or upper second class level) **and / or** professional experience and qualifications **and / or** practical experience. There is a clear outline of how we make our decision in '[Assessment Criteria](#)', below.
- Your proposed project must align to one of the AHRC Pathways (see [Appendix 1](#) for a list of Pathways).
- We consider full time and part time applications to be equally important.
- Degrees gained outside the UK are recognised. For non-UK qualifications, transcripts in English as well as details in the applicant's language must be provided with the application form.
- Lancaster University may offer up to 30% of the AHRC awards to International PhD candidates (definition below). All funded AHRC studentships, whether UK or International, will be eligible for a full award which includes a stipend to support living costs and fees at the standard UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) home fee rate. The university will fund the difference between the Home and Overseas tuition fee for any successful Overseas applicant(s).
- To be classed as a Home candidate you must meet the following criteria:
 - Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
 - Have settled status, or
 - Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
 - Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

If you do not meet the criteria above, you will be classed as an International student. You can refer to UKRI Terms and Conditions for Training Grants for full details

<https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

- Candidates who are currently undertaking or have gained or completed the requirements for a doctoral degree in any subject, however funded, are not eligible to apply for funding.

3. FHASS STUDENTSHIP – AWARD DETAILS

FHASS provides funding to enable candidates to study at Lancaster University at the doctoral level. The postgraduate awards programme is administered as follows:

Either 3.5 years full time or part time funding *pro rata*

This scheme provides support for up to three and a half years of full-time study or part-time study *pro rata* for a programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree.

4. FHASS STUDENTSHIP - ELIGIBILITY

Candidates need to be aware that the deadline to apply to the university for admission for a place on a PhD programme is 13th February 2026 at the latest.

You MUST have applied to your programme of study by this date or your funding application will not be eligible.

- Lancaster University is committed to working with candidates from underrepresented communities and those from non-traditional academic backgrounds. You will be able to demonstrate your talent and your experience on the application form, and your referees can also provide additional information that we might need to make our decision. For more information about our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), please visit our website: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/edi/>
- Successful candidates typically have qualifications equivalent to a good honours degree (first or upper second class level) **and / or** professional experience and qualifications **and / or** practical experience. There is a clear outline of how we make our decision in '[Assessment Criteria](#)', below.
- You should typically either have applied for a PhD programme in FHASS or at least one of your supervisors must be in FHASS.
- We consider full time and part time applications to be equally important.
- Degrees gained outside the UK are recognised. For non-UK qualifications, transcripts in English as well as details in the applicant's language must be provided with the application form.
- Both domestic and international student are eligible to apply for a FHASS scholarship. All recipients of a FHASS studentships will be eligible for a full award which includes a stipend to support living costs and fees at the standard UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) home fee rate. The university will fund the difference between the Home and Overseas tuition fee for any successful Overseas applicant(s).
- A proportion of FHASS scholarship awards are reserved for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAEM) applicants with UK Home status.
- To be classed as a Home candidate you must meet the following criteria:
 - Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
 - Have settled status, or
 - Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
 - Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

If you do not meet the criteria above, you will be classed as an International student.

- Candidates who are currently undertaking or have gained or completed the requirements for a doctoral degree in any subject, however funded, are not eligible to apply for funding.

4. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

a. First stage – Institutional application

To submit a funding application, you must have **applied** for a place on a PhD programme at Lancaster University no later than six weeks before the funding application deadline. Your application for admission onto your chosen programme must be **complete** by this deadline.

b. Second stage – Funding application

Once you have applied to your institution, you can now begin your funding application. You will complete the [online Lancaster University FHASS Scholarship and AHRC Studentship Application form](#).

Upon completion of the form, you will automatically receive an email with a request and link to upload additional documentation. Make sure to check any spam folders so the email is not missed.

You must upload the following:

- A completed [FHASS + AHRC funding support form](#)
- TWO references of which only ONE can be from your potential supervisory team. There is advice on what to include in [reference letters below](#).
- A copy of your academic transcripts for your undergraduate and where relevant, postgraduate (e.g. Masters) degrees you have undertaken.

Once uploaded, your documentation cannot be changed.

All applicants are required to submit all required documents and/or fields regardless of whether they have already been submitted as part of any previous application process at Lancaster University.

If indicated in your online form, a link will also be sent to your named referees so that they can upload a copy of your reference. We would recommend that you inform your referee(s) that this email request will be sent and for them to check any spam or junk folders. They must upload any and all references no later than the application deadline date.

All listed forms, documents and references should be submitted no later than **24th March 2026**. Any application that is missing any required documentation or fields will be deemed incomplete and summarily rejected.

Your application will be judged on the basis of your funding application form, your references, and your academic transcripts. See '[Assessment Criteria](#)', below.

There is only one closing date for funding applications each year and there is no flexibility on this date.

5. ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS - PROCESS

a. The Process

Administrative Checks

Following the final deadline for applications, all applications will be checked by our administrative team to confirm that all eligibility requirements are met and that all applications are complete with all necessary documents. Any applications that do not meet eligibility requirements or that are incomplete (e.g. missing documents, incomplete forms) will be summarily rejected.

School-Level

Your application will initially be assessed by a **School-Level PGR Funding Panel**. This group consists of academics from within the school to which your chosen PhD programme belongs (see details [in Appendix II](#)). Each application is judged on its own merits based on the information provided in your application form, support form, references and transcripts. The Panel agrees a mark for each application and applications are then ranked. The top-ranked applications are shortlisted for the next stage in the process.

Faculty-Level

The School-Level PGR Panel will then forward their top-ranked applications for consideration by the **FHASS PGR Funding Committee**. This consists of each of the School PGR leads, the FHASS Associate Dean for Research, and the FHASS Director of Postgraduate Research. Each member of the Committee will review and rank the shortlisted candidates. They will then meet to determine final allocation of awards.

b. Outcome of Application

At the end of each stage of the process, unsuccessful or otherwise rejected candidates will be notified via email.

Successful candidates will be notified in approximately mid. June 2026.

A small number of candidates will be placed on the reserve list (this will be indicated in the non-acceptance email). In the event a successful candidate chooses to reject their award offer, the award will be offered to the next candidate on the reserve list. The reserve list will close before the beginning of the 2026-27 academic year or when all offers of award have been accepted (whichever is earliest), after which no further offers of award will be made.

In the event that your funding application is unsuccessful, we still hope you will study here at Lancaster and join our thriving community of postgraduate researchers.

c. Taking up an Award

Award holders are normally expected to begin their programme of study in **2026-27 academic year** and no later than January 2027.

Holders of a full award will receive the first instalment of their maintenance grant in the first month of their studies.

In certain circumstances, such as illness, or where there is a need to give a period of notice to an employer, we will consider deferring the start date of a doctoral programme, to no later than January 2027 (with approval from the FHASS PGR office). You should contact fhasspgrfunding@lancaster.ac.uk in advance, including supporting letters from your principal supervisor.

If you are unable to take up your award in the year in which it was awarded, it will be withdrawn and you will have to re-apply in the competition in the following year, should an award be available. You will need to inform us of your decision at the earliest possible stage by e-mail. Make sure to include fhasspgrfunding@lancaster.ac.uk in your email.

The continuation of doctoral awards is subject to continuing satisfactory progress, subject to the University and Faculty's standard monitoring and progression processes, and can be withdrawn at any time if progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory.

d. Resubmitting Applications

If you are unsuccessful in one year's competition you may apply in the next year's competition providing you continue to meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

Candidates who are currently undertaking or have gained or completed the requirements for a doctoral degree in any subject, however funded, are not eligible to apply for funding.

e. Appeals Process

The competition is fierce and many highly qualified and strongly supported candidates do not get an award. Each application is carefully scrutinised by the assessors, and their decision is reached in the context of competing applications and an overview of the entire cohort. Individual feedback on applications will not be available.

6. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Competition for studentships is fierce. At each stage, the relevant panel/committee will score each candidate a mark on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest, 1 the lowest) for their **research proposal** and their **preparedness for research (explained below)**.

a. The Research Proposal

The quality of the **research proposal** is judged in terms of:

- (i) Robust and convincing argument;
- (ii) structure and rigour;
- (iii) originality;
- (iv) design of the research and its feasibility

The assessors will look for evidence of an ability to articulate a research project, a coherent plan for doctoral study, and a good awareness of the place of the research within the current field.

Grade	Descriptor
9-10	Outstanding proposal in terms of both plausibility and originality. The research questions are excellent, there is strong engagement with the wider field, the methodology is appropriate and perhaps innovative. The intellectual importance of the project is clear and the proposal outlines in detail the contribution that the project will make to the field. A high priority for funding.
7-8	A very strong proposal outlined clearly. Research questions are clear and well outlined, there is an understanding of the wider field and the methodology is appropriate. The candidate makes a good case for the intellectual importance of the project. The research is likely to be feasible within the period of study. Worthy of considering for funding.
3-6	A promising proposal with some limited weaknesses that need to be addressed. Research questions are clear, and there is some understanding of the wider field. The methodology is solid and the candidate has some awareness of the intervention that the project makes in the discipline or field. The project will probably be feasible within the period of study. In the context of the funding competition this will not be possible to be considered for funding.
1-2	Problematic proposal – would need further work before it could be firmly supported.

b. The Candidate

Panels will assess the candidate's **preparedness for research** based on the following:

- (i) career information provided in the application (including information on marks achieved so far as reported in the references and/or transcripts), as well as any relevant practical or professional achievement;
- (ii) references;
- (iii) relevant previous experience (academic and professional) including technical competence such as language skills;
- (iv) how the programme of study will contribute to their long-term career plans.

Grade	Descriptor
9-10	An outstanding candidate with strong evidence of exceptional academic, practical, or professional achievement. Candidates in this zone would typically have achieved a high first/ Distinction, predominantly in the range 75-80, and in some cases at 80+ (or clear evidence that they have the potential to reach that level). Candidates in this zone will often have been awarded academic, artistic, professional or other prizes. If appropriate impressive professional or practical experience is outlined in detail. Excellent references discuss in detail the candidate's high-calibre intellectual background, suitability for research, and research skills. Candidate demonstrates excellent potential for original independent research and a strong sense of the importance of doctoral study to their career development. To be funded as a matter of priority.
7-8	A very strong candidate with excellent academic, practical, or professional achievement. Candidates in this zone would typically have achieved a first class/ Distinction, predominantly in the range 70-75 (or clear evidence that they have the potential to reach that level). If appropriate good professional or practical experience is outlined. References are strong and discuss the candidate's ability and suitability for research. Candidate shows good potential for original independent research and a sense of the importance of doctoral study to their career development. Worth considering for funding.
3-6	A solid candidate with evidence of good academic, practical or professional achievement. Candidates in this zone would typically have achieved a 2:1/ Merit (or there is clear evidence that the candidate has the potential to reach that level). If appropriate there is some evidence of professional or practical experience. References are solid and discuss the candidate's background. The candidate is reasonably well prepared for doctoral study but in the context of the funding competition not to be considered for funding.
1-2	Candidate is significantly below the expected standards. Candidates would have achieved a pass at MA level and comparatively low marks in their first degree (marks in the 50s). If appropriate there is little evidence of professional or practical experience. References are brief. We are very unlikely to support candidates with 2:2s, unless the first degree result was an aberration explained by the referees, or if they have a high-graded masters to enhance this.

Candidates may wish to discuss issues related to disability or extenuating circumstances with their referees and, if necessary, grant permission to include relevant information in the reference letter. It is the student's responsibility to contact and chase up relevant references in this case. The relevant School PGR Funding Panel can take the relevant information provided by the referees into consideration when accessing the application.

c. **Project Fit**

The quality of **Project Fit** is judged in terms of:

- (i) fit of the project with supervisory team
- (ii) fit of the project within the faculty and the relevant pathways/disciplines (AHRC pathways, FHASS disciplines).

Grade	Descriptor
9-10	The supervisory team is excellent and the research is feasible within the period of study. The project fits very well within FHASS.
7-8	The supervisory team is well matched to the project. The project fits within FHASS.

3-6	The supervisory team is good.
1-2	Proposed supervisory team is not suitable or no supervisory team with expertise available.

7. APPLICATION TIMETABLE

Friday 13th February 2026	Ensure you have submitted an application for a PhD programme place at Lancaster University.
Friday 24th March 2026	Deadline funding applications to be submitted with all documents and references.
April through to June 2026	Applications are reviewed at various stages as explained in _____. Unsuccessful candidates are informed at the end of each stage by email.
Approx. mid June 2026	Successful candidates to be notified of the outcome by email.
Approx. end June 2026	Deadline for successful candidates to confirm acceptance of the award. A specific deadline will be given in letter of award but applicants will have at least 2 weeks to make their decision. Unsuccessful and any reserve candidates are contacted.
2026-27 academic year	Commencement of studies.

8. APPLICATION GUIDANCE

Funding Application Form

These notes will help you fill in the [FHASS Scholarship and AHRC Studentship Application Form](#)

1. Applicant Name

Please provide your name as it appears in on your programme application form.

2. Lancaster University Application Reference Number:

Please provide your Programme Application Number – it is eight digits and should begin with the number 3. It is typically found on the Admissions Portal and in any emails (including offer emails) that Admissions have sent you.

3. Email Address

This email is where any upload link requests for documents will be sent. Make sure it is correct.

4. Studentships available:

Please tick the studentships/scholarships you wish to apply for. You can apply for one or both funding competitions where eligible.

5. External Funding

We ask that students provide details of any other funding they apply for. List the name of the funding competition and provide any further details as you wish.

6. Supervisors

Please provide the names of your prospective supervisor team. If unknown, leave blank.

7. FHASS Disciplines:

Please name the FHASS discipline to which your chosen PhD programme belongs. Most of the time this is obvious but if you are unsure, see [Appendix II](#). If your chosen PhD programme is from outside of FHASS, please indicate as such.

8. AHRC Pathway (for AHRC applicants only)

Please name the AHRC pathway to which your proposed project best aligns to. If you are unsure, we recommend contacting your potential supervisory team.

9. Fee Status

Please indicate whether you will be paying UK or International fees. To be eligible for UK (Home) fees, you must:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

10. BAEM award (for UK/Home fees students only)

UK/Home students are eligible to be considered for a proportion of ringfenced FHASS studentships for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority students. If you wish to be considered, please indicate.

11. Full Time or Part Time

Please indicate if you have applied to complete your PhD programme as a full or part time student.

12. Attendance Status

Please indicate if you have applied to study at the university (e.g. at Lancaster campus) or away from the university (e.g. distance learning).

13. Origin of Transcript

As part of the application process, you are required to submit a copy of your undergraduate (and postgraduate) transcripts. If these are from a non-UK university, please indicate so our admissions team can provide guidance to the funding panels on international degree equivalencies.

14. First/Second Referee Name

Provide the full name of each referee, including any titles e.g. Doctor

15. First/Second Referee Email

Please provide the email address of each referee. Make sure this is completely accurate as it is to this email that we will send an automated request for a reference.

16. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion section

This section is completely optional. This section is collected for monitoring purposes so that the AHRC and Lancaster University can better understand how we are reaching candidates from underrepresented groups or backgrounds. Please be assured that the form will be anonymised and separated from your application form before the assessment stage process.

17. Additional Information

The information requested here is again optional but helps us improve our services and ability to reach candidates. This section is anonymised and will not affect your application.

18. Acknowledgement

The statement provided must be read and confirmed in order to submit the form.

Once the form is submitted, you will receive an email with a link that you can use to upload all other necessary documents. Your referees will also receive an email so they can upload their supporting statements.

Support Form

These notes will help you fill in **the**

1. Name

Please provide your full name. Make sure it matches how your name is given on the main application form.

2. Lancaster University Application Reference Number

Please provide your Programme Application Number – it is eight digits and should begin with the number 3. It is typically found on the Admissions Portal and in any emails (including offer emails) that Admissions have sent you.

3. Name of Programme

Please provide the name of the PhD programme you have applied for.

4. FHASS Discipline

Please provide the discipline which your PhD programme belongs. If you are unsure to which FHASS discipline your programme belongs, see [Appendix II](#). If your programme is non-FHASS, please provide the name of your intended faculty (e.g. FHM, FST, LUMS).

5. Project Title

The title of the PhD project should be entered.

6. Proposed Supervisor(s)

Please give the names of your proposed supervisors if known.

7. PhD/Project Proposal (max. 1000 words)

Please give details of your PhD proposal in up to 1000 words. This limit includes bibliography, tables, figures, table/ figure captions and footnotes. Applications which do not follow this limit will be disqualified. Please provide a word count at the end of the proposal. If you are including footnotes they will count towards the final word count. Be careful if you are pasting tables or other illustrations as they will also contribute to word count and may disrupt your formatting.

8. Qualifications

Please enter your relevant qualifications, awarding institution, and class or Grade Point Average (GPA) awarded. This should include any relevant professional qualifications. If you are currently undertaking a programme of any kind, please indicate what this is and indicate 'pending' under results.

9. Details of Career or Education Break (max. 150 words)

Please feel free to provide details of any significant break(s) in your career or education.

10. Details of Relevant Professional/Practical Experience (max. 400 words)

The assessors will use this information to establish any research, practice-based, or professional experience you have gained that might contribute to the intended research topic. What makes your experience distinctive and contribute to the unique aspect of your project? Please supply the kind and extent of any experience relevant to your proposed research. If you do not have relevant information you can leave this section blank and you will not be penalised.

11. Research Training and Resources needs (max. 150 words)

Please give details of any identified training needs for your doctoral programme and state whether or not this has been discussed with your supervisors. Please also state whether your research project will require you to undertake research abroad or require additional resources (e.g. research/study abroad, language training, use of specialist equipment/facilities etc).

12. Statement and Signature

The provided statement must be read and confirmed with your signature for this form to be accepted. A typed signature is acceptable.

References and transcripts

Your application will be judged on the basis of your application form, your references, and your academic transcripts. These must be uploaded by the submission deadline. The references and transcripts submitted in support of your application for a place will suffice for this purpose; however updated documents may be submitted if appropriate. This is advised if your new documents are able to provide new information, for instance regarding your performance on a master's degree currently in progress. It is your responsibility to contact and chase up relevant references in this case.

Guidance for references:

- Only ONE potential supervisor may be a referee.
- Referees should comment on the academic ability of the candidate or their professional or practical experience.
- Referees should discuss the candidate's intellectual ability. They should comment on the candidate's suitability for postgraduate training in general and for the research they propose to undertake.

- Where possible, the referees should comment on the research project in relation to the candidate, the supervisors, and the research environment.
- Referees should avoid generalisations, repetitions, and 'lukewarm' statements in references.
- Extracurricular activities should also be highlighted in references to show that the referee knows the candidate well.
- If the candidate is not from a UK institution it will be useful for the references to discuss their qualifications and underline whether they are particularly exceptional.
- Referees might wish to raise anything that might have prevented the candidate from achieving their maximum potential, if this is appropriate.
- Referees should look at the [Assessment Criteria](#) when preparing their references.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF AHRC PATHWAYS

<u>Pathway</u>
Classics
Creative Writing
Dance, Drama and Performing Arts
English
Heritage
History
Language Based Area Studies
Law
Linguistics
Media and Cultural Studies
Music
Philosophy
Religions and Theology
Visual Arts: Arts and Design

APPENDIX II – LIST OF FHASS SCHOOLS and DISCIPLINES

The Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Lancaster is divided into four schools under which sit a variety of disciplines.

School of Arts

- Architecture
- Contemporary Arts
- Creative Writing
- Design
- English Literature
- Film & Media
- Fine Art
- Theatre Studies

School of Global Affairs

- History
- Politics
- Philosophy
- Religious Studies
- Languages and Global Cultures
- International Relations

School of Law

- Law

School of Social Sciences

- Educational Research
- Linguistics and English Language
- Sociology
- Criminology
- Social Work