

Student-Led Studentship Application: Guidance Notes for October 2024 Entry

Please **do not** complete a SEDarc application unless you have been advised to do so by your institutional administrator.

Please read these guidance notes before submitting your SEDarc application. Applicants should answer all questions unless indicated otherwise.

The Application Process

This process requires you to:

- Complete the application form.
- Submit documents to support your application once you have completed writing your application.
- Your application will then be assessed by your chosen university.
- If nominated, you will need to apply via the online SEDarc application form.
- If nominated, complete the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) information form through which we gather equality, diversity and inclusion information.
- If nominated, complete the relevant section of the application form if you are applying for an Opportunity Studentship.

Guidance Notes Student Phase Application

These notes tell you what questions you are required to answer in your application. Each question (where appropriate) is followed by guidance on how best to answer that question.

Please read these notes, as they will support you in writing the best application possible. You must consult your proposed primary supervisor when drafting your application, and they will be required to sign your application.

SECTION 1: PERSONAL DETAILS

You will be asked to

- Provide your personal information and home address.
- Confirm your residential status,
- State whether you would like to study full or part-time,
- State your chosen SEDarc theme.

Home Address

This should be the address at which you are ordinarily resident during the majority of the year.

Residential Eligibility Rules

All applicants, regardless of their country of origin or nationality, are eligible to apply for a fully funded studentship. SEDarc can award 30% of its studentships to international applicants. Further information from the UKRI on residential eligibility can be found [here](#).

You must check your residential status, as you will need to indicate in your application whether you are a home or an international applicant.

To be a **home** student, 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 any of the criteria above, you are classed as an **international student**.

Mode of Study

SEDarc offers both full-time (usually 37.5 hours per week) and part-time study (approximately 18 hours per week).

For applicants selecting to study for a +3.5 PhD on a full-time basis, you will study for 3 years 3 months + 3 months for a placement. For part-time study this would be 6.5 years + 6 months placement.

Applicants who select the 1 + 3.5 route on a full-time basis will study for 1-year Masters + 3 years 3 months PhD study + 3 months for a placement. For part-time study would be 2 years + 6.5 years + 6 months for a placement.

Please note that the UKRI expects all students to submit their thesis within the funded period.

It is possible to change your mode of study once during your studentship, subject to certain conditions.

SEDarc Theme

Please select your theme of choice by ticking the relevant box. If your proposal aligns with more than one theme then please choose the one that aligns most closely.

SEDarc Institution and Department

Please select which institution you are applying to and then confirm the department you intend to study in.

SECTION 2: STUDENTSHIP STRUCTURE/ROUTE

Studentship Structure

You will be asked to apply for a specific structure/route of studentship.

The standard funding for a PhD is 3.5 years full-time which includes a 3-month placement (or part-time equivalent). Funding for a 1 + 3.5 is available where you are applying to take a Masters degree. This also includes a 3 month placement. Part-time students will be funded on a *pro rata* basis.

There are **three stages to making a SEDarc application:**

- Apply to your chosen university for a postgraduate place,
- Discuss your application with your proposed supervisors and your SEDarc institutional lead,
- If you are nominated by your institution to apply for a SEDarc studentship, then complete the application by the deadline.

In order to apply for a SEDarc studentship, you must have had an interview (online or in-person) about your proposed PhD project in your institution.

Check with the SEDarc university you are applying to for the deadline for applying for a post-graduate place, as these deadlines fall earlier in the year than the SEDarc deadline.

We strongly advise you to apply several weeks before this to allow sufficient time to complete the stages above. To submit an application, you **must:**

- Discuss this with your proposed supervisor, who will be required to complete a statement of support for your application;
- Read the selection criteria as your application will be judged according to these criteria; and,
- Complete the online application. Other forms of the application will not be accepted.

You are only permitted to submit ONE application for a **student-led studentship** commencing in October 2024.

You do **not** need to have a Masters degree to apply for a +3.5 PhD. If you have equivalent professional experience or an undergraduate degree plus relevant professional experience, you may be eligible for an award. Please also note that you cannot apply for Masters-level study if you already possess a Master's degree in the social sciences. ***Please do the following to determine the right structure of studies for you before starting your application:***

- Complete the SEDarc Development Needs Assessment (DNA) on the application form. This provides an indication of your fitness to start PhD study without Masters-level training. We expect PhD students to have reasonable command of many of these topics prior to commencing their studies.
- Share this with your supervisor as soon as possible. Please note that the final decision will rest with SEDarc. You and our supervisors should talk directly to your SEDarc institutional lead if you have questions about the right structure for your studies.

Studentship Details

Guidance for the two types of SEDarc studentships is set out below:

- +3.5 studentships
- 1+3.5 studentships

+3.5 Studentships

The minimum duration of a studentship will be 3.5 years: this covers a PhD and a placement of approximately 3 months.

1+3.5 Studentships

The maximum duration of a studentship will be 4.5 years: this covers a Masters degree followed by a PhD, as well as the 3-month placement. This is only available to those that do not already hold a social science PhD.

If applicable, please indicate the SEDarc compliant Masters you plan to study for (required)

You may only apply for a Masters programme listed in the SEDarc application form and offered by your chosen university.

Declaration Regarding Studentship Structure (required)

You will be asked to confirm that, although you are applying for a particular studentship structure (which you will have done under “Section 2 – Studentship theme”), you may be offered a studentship with a different structure.

If SEDarc determines that you have not already met the majority of the ESRC’s core research methods training requirements, you may be offered a different award structure from the one for which you applied.

Your SEDarc Institution

You will be asked to select the relevant SEDarc institution that you intend to study.

If you are applying for a 1+3.5 studentship, you are expected to complete your Masters and PhD at the same university.

Concurrent Funding Applications

You will be asked if you are making a separate application for any other funded studentships. Please note this is for information only and will not prejudice your application to SEDarc in any way.

Please indicate whether you are also applying for any other funded studentship at any other university, or any other studentship funded by UKRI (the umbrella body for all UK Research Councils, including the ESRC).

Please note that you are ineligible to receive a Government Funded Postgraduate Doctoral Loan simultaneously with UKRI funding. Please also see paragraph TGC 5.2.3 in the UKRI Guidance in relation to UKRI rules on funding from other sources for the same research.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Research Proposal

- You must discuss your research proposal with your primary supervisor before submitting your application form.
- It is your responsibility to write your own research proposal, it must not be written by anyone else, e.g., your supervisor. 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, 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.

You will be asked to provide your research proposal title.

- State the title of your proposed research project.
- Your title must be no more than 150 characters, including spaces between words, and punctuation.

You will be asked to provide an abstract, or summary, of your research proposal.

- This is limited to a maximum of 250 words.
- *Tip:* we suggest that you draft your answers for this section using Word (or equivalent) which can count characters and then cut and paste it into the application form, to ensure you stick to the character limit.
- Your abstract 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. The SEDarc reviewers assessing your application may not be experts in your disciplinary area, and need to be able to understand what you will be researching.
- If you are awarded a studentship, your full research abstract will be made public by the ESRC via UKRI's Gateway to Research. This is a condition of all studentship awards unless there is an embargo on the publication of your research, or it raises issues of intellectual property. Please let us know if this is the case.

You will be asked to provide a detailed research proposal.

- There is a strict limit of 1,500 words for this section. This limit applies to all the text contained in this text box, that is, to your proposal description, research background and questions, research methods, and schedule of work.
- This limit of 1,500 words does not include your title, abstract or bibliography, for which different character limits apply. Please note that the application form does not accept footnotes.
- If you exceed this limit, any additional words will be disregarded by those assessing your application. This may mean that your application does not score as highly as it might have done.

Your proposal should follow this structure:

- i) research background and fit to the selected challenge-led theme;
- ii) research questions and aims;
- iii) research plan (including methods);
- iv) proposed impact;
- v) proposed timeline.

Consider covering the following points:

- The key areas/issues covered by the project, and the research problems or questions you intend to address and why;
- 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, and potential impact for, non-academic beneficiaries, as appropriate;
- The methods and critical approaches that you plan to use, and the sources for these, if appropriate;
- How the research project will develop over the period of the award (e.g. key stages, timetable); and,

You will be asked to provide a bibliography for your research proposal. Please list the key texts to which you have referred in your research proposal.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to assess applications across all themes and degree formats.

Fit to Themes (33%)

This will be based on how well your research project is fit around one of the five interdisciplinary SEDarc themes.

Project Quality and Feasibility (33%)

This will be based on your outline of your proposed research project, your reasons for pursuing it, and its wider significance. SEDarc assessors will be looking for evidence of the following: your ability to design and conduct a research project; a coherent and well-thought-out research plan; a strong awareness of the place of the literature in your field; and the potential impact of your research on professional practice. Reference will be made to your personal statement, as contained in your application, as well as your supervisors' supporting statement.

Student Quality (33%)

This will be based on your description of how your previous experience (this includes life experience as well as academic and/or professional experience) has prepared you for postgraduate study and research. Reference will be made to your personal statement, as contained in your application, as well as your supervisor's supporting statement.

Please note that all 4-year award applications (1+3.5) will be assessed in a way that recognises that applicants are likely to have had less training and fewer opportunities to develop a detailed proposed research project than an applicant for a +3.5 studentship.

Project details

You will be asked to confirm whether your project develops or uses advanced quantitative methods, if your project uses very large datasets or big data methods, or if your project involves interdisciplinary collaboration with researchers outside of the social sciences.

Ethical Approval for your Research Proposal

You will be asked to indicate what ethical considerations are raised by your research project, and how you plan to address these.

- Your proposed research is required to conform both to the ethical standards required by your home institution and to the [ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics](#).
- If you are unsure about whether your research gives rise to any ethical considerations, please discuss this with your proposed primary supervisor.

Placement

You will be asked to confirm that you understand the placement requirements. The length of studentship, either +3.5 or 1+3.5 **includes** a three-month placement. If you do not take a placement, the length of your studentship will be reduced by three months and you are asked to confirm that you understand this.

SECTION 4: RESOURCING

You will be asked whether your project is able to be delivered within the Research Training Support Grant funding available (currently estimated at £940 per year).

- 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 if your application is successful.
- Please read the SEDarc Research Training Support Grant guidance notes, which sets out the costs you can apply for under this fund. These are available via your university point of contact.
- If you are intending to undertake **fieldwork in the UK**, and this will cost more than £940 a year then please include these costs in your application.
- If you will need more than £940 per year you will need to set out in your application why you will need more funding, what it is for, and how much you would need.

Overseas Fieldwork (OFW)

If you state in your application that you will not need to conduct OFW but change your mind after you start your studies, it is highly unlikely that you will be permitted to apply for funding to support this, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

So, please think very carefully about whether you will need to conduct OFW for your research and discuss this with your supervisor. OFW is defined as conducting fieldwork anywhere outside the UK.

You will be asked if you plan to undertake overseas fieldwork as part of your research project.

- If you answer "No", *you will be asked next whether you require language training.*

- If you answer “Yes”, please read the notes below and answer the following additional questions:
 - Which country you intend to conduct your fieldwork in.
 - How long you will need to spend in this country to complete your fieldwork.
 - How much you estimate it will cost to undertake this fieldwork in total.
 - Provide an itemised list of the main costs you are likely to incur.
- You must read the SEDarc Overseas Fieldwork policy: Guidance for students. These are available via your university point of contact.
- You will need to draw up a clear budget for your OFW that itemises all the standard costs you will incur (flights, visa, vaccinations etc.) with a brief justification for any further costs. Please be realistic when drawing up your fieldwork budget and ensure that the costs stated are realistic. Those reviewing your SEDarc application form will assess whether your research project is feasible in light of your plan and budget for conducting OFW.
- If you are awarded a SEDarc Studentship, you will still need to submit a formal, more detailed application, supported by your supervisor, for funding for OFW once you have started your studies, as this funding will not be automatically paid to you.

Language training

You will be asked if you plan to undertake language training as part of your research project.

- If you answer “No” *you will be asked next whether you have a collaborative element to your studentship.*
- If you answer “Yes” answer the following additional question:
 - What is the length of funded extension you will apply for to learn this language, based on the ESRC guidance on language learning extensions?

If you answer “No” to this question, you will not be permitted to apply for a language training extension if you change your mind once you have started your studentship, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- You **must** read the SEDarc Difficult Language Training Guidance for students before answering this question.
- 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 language where this is crucial to the success of your research. If you are planning to spend extended time in the field, you are expected to be competent in a language which is used in the area in which you will be based.
- If you need to learn a language, you will need to check whether this language qualifies for an extension and, if so, for how long. Please refer to Annex 2 of the [ESRC’s Postgraduate Funding Guide](#) for this information. (Please note that the ESRC refers to learning **any** language as “difficult language training”.)
- Please discuss this issue with your supervisor. You will need to consider issues such as whether you will need to develop competence in a local dialect, the level of competence you need to achieve in this language to carry out your research etc.

- Those reviewing your SEDarc application form will assess whether your research project is feasible considering the language training you propose to undertake. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence may be required to show that you will be capable of learning the language in the time available.
- If you are awarded a SEDarc studentship, you will need to submit a more detailed application, supported by your supervisor, for an extension to your funding to learn or develop a language, as this will not be granted automatically.

Collaborative studentship information

You will be asked whether your research project, as outlined in your application, includes a collaborative element.

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 work with them on their research project. A collaborative partner is not a university, but can be a business, public or third sector organisation. There can be more than one collaborative partner.

Collaborative partners must contribute something of value to your research project, for example, contributing financially to help cover studentship costs, providing access to their datasets, or providing an additional supervisor with complementary knowledge or expertise. It is not only important to demonstrate that your 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 your research project (impact). If an external organisation provides a placement *only*, then this does not qualify as a collaborative partner.

Details of collaborative partner(s)

These questions apply only to those whose research project has a collaborative element.

You will be asked to provide details of your collaborative partner, including whether you are able to provide a letter of support from that partner, and whether you have a second collaborative partner.

- Please provide the following details:
 - The name of your collaborating organisation(s);
 - The name, position, and contact details of your contact in this (these) organisation(s);
 - Whether you are able to provide a letter of support from this organisation;
- Please supply a letter of support from your collaborative partner(s) for your research proposal if you are able to do so.
- In brief, the letter should:
 - state why the collaborator(s) would like to partner with you in this research project, and what they hope to gain from the collaboration; and,
 - provide a brief statement about what the collaborator(s) will contribute to your project, including any financial and/or in-kind contributions (such as access to their data).
- If you can provide a letter, you will be asked to upload it with your application.

You will be asked to state the nature and value of the contribution your collaborative partner(s) will be providing to your research project via SEDarc.

SECTION 5: EDUCATION, QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL STATEMENT

Education and Training

You will be asked to provide details of your previous education and training, including your undergraduate degree, your Masters degree (if you have one, or are currently studying for one), and your PhD (only if you have already started studying towards your PhD).

- You must complete this section even and have discussed the outcome with your supervisor.
- For each higher education qualification you hold, please provide the information outlined below.
 - 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.

Your Past Research Methods Training

Your research methods training/skills

You will be asked a series of questions to determine what research methods training and/or skills you already have.

- This information is required to determine whether you are able to enter directly onto a PhD or whether you need Masters-level training.
- These learning outcomes have been agreed to ensure you are in the best possible position to undertake your PhD research, and to build your employability and transferrable skills.
- Based on the information you provide, if your degree and/or your professional experience is/are judged as having sufficient research methods training, you will be permitted to apply for a +3.5 PhD.
- If your degree or professional experience does not include sufficient research methods training, you will either be required to study for a Masters degree via our 1+3.5 structure of study, or you might be asked to complete specific Masters-level modules alongside your PhD.
- If you have had formal training in these elements, please either provide a hyperlink to a webpage with a detailed module outline or upload a copy of the detailed module outline in Section 7 of the application form "Upload your documents".
- You will also be asked to make a declaration as to whether you have previously encountered accessibility issues.

Work Experience

You will be asked whether you have any work experience which is relevant to your research project.

- Provide details of your work experience; and,
- If there have been any gaps in your work experience record, please explain these.

If you have **never had any work experience**, please don't worry, as this will **not** have a negative effect on your application.

- Where you have held more than one relevant post, please record all of these using the following format:
 - The name of your employer/organisation;
 - The position you held in this organisation;
 - The date you started and finished your employment;

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.

You will be asked to explain any gaps in your professional experience record.

- This section only applies to applicants who have professional experience, and for whom there are gaps in this experience.
- 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 disqualify you from applying** for a studentship, **nor will they have a negative effect on your application**. SEDarc welcomes applications from people who have had career or work breaks.

SECTION 6: DOCUMENT UPLOAD

You will be asked to upload all the documents needed to support your application.

Documents to be uploaded include the following:

- Degree certificates and/or degree award letters: please scan your degree certificates or official award letters and upload these.
- Transcripts (for those who hold a non-compliant Masters or professional experience which has provided them with research methods training): please scan copies of any detailed module outlines or transcripts of modules you mentioned in Section 6 – your research training methods – and upload these. If you have any certificates from completing professional training, please scan and upload these.
- Letter of support, if you have a collaborative element to your studentship: if you are applying for a studentship with a collaborative element, please upload your letter of support from your collaborative partner.
- Please give each document a title which reflects what it contains e.g. "[name] undergrad degree cert".
- Upload documents only as the following file types .doc, .docx, .pdf or .jpeg/.jpg.
- Please check that all your necessary documents uploaded.
- You can upload as many documents as you like, but please do not upload documents other than those listed above. For example, please do not upload a cv, any articles you have written, any letters of reference etc.

SECTION 7: PERSONAL STATEMENT

You will be asked to provide a personal statement, addressing the issues set out in the guidance below. Please read the notes below carefully in drafting your statement, for which there is a **maximum word count of 500 words**.

- **Please give your reasons for applying.** In doing so, please address the following:
 - Why you think you deserve a studentship;
 - Why you want to study with SEDarc specifically, and how you plan to take advantage of the opportunities SEDarc offers its students; and,
 - Your preparedness for the demands of postgraduate life by discussing your passion for your topic, as well as your existing academic, professional, and life knowledge and experience.
- **What are your career goals:** in particular, tell us about your long-term career ambitions, and how a SEDarc studentship relates to these.
- **Your preparation for further study:** discuss how your undergraduate and/or Masters degree, as well as any life or professional experience you have, has prepared you for your proposed research project.
- **Your skillset:**
 - Highlight your relevant skills and knowledge that will enable you to make an impact, and explain what that impact will be.
 - Summarise your abilities in core areas related to your research project, including IT, organisation, communication, time management and critical thinking.
 - 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 a great candidate for a SEDarc studentship.

Declaration

Please read the declaration carefully and tick the box to confirm you accept these terms and conditions.

Ensuring your Application is Complete

Please ensure that you have completed all questions that form part of your application and uploaded any documents required before you submit your application.

SECTION 8: SUPERVISOR DETAILS

You will be asked to provide the details of your proposed primary and second supervisor.

- All SEDarc-funded students must have **two academic supervisors**.
- You must already have identified your proposed primary supervisor and have been in contact with them to discuss your application.
- If you need guidance on finding a supervisor, please email your SEDarc administrative lead who will be your initial contact. They will do so by providing you with the name and email address of an academic who you will then need to contact yourself.
- Your proposed primary supervisor must be based at your chosen SEDarc university, and you must consult this supervisor before completing this application form.

- Your primary supervisor will be able to advise you on who could act as your second supervisor.
- Your second supervisor can also be based at your chosen university but could be based at another SEDarc university. However, both supervisors must be based at SEDarc universities.
- Please contact your supervisor to let them know that they will need to provide a statement. We cannot accept an application without a supervisor supporting statement.

COMPLETING THE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION FORM

If shortlisted, you will need to complete the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion form.

SEDarc is committed to an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, and we acknowledge and embrace diversity.

SEDarc and the ESRC are committed to ensuring that those applying for studentships are selected on 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. SEDarc needs your help and co-operation to enable it to do this. Filling in this form is compulsory but, if there are questions you do not wish to answer, you have the option of ticking “prefer not to say”. 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 SEDarc staff members.

Opportunity Studentships

We would encourage anyone meeting the criteria listed to apply for an Opportunity Studentship, see website for full details.

The information you provide on this form will not be released to those involved in making the decision on who receives a studentship.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Reminder: the deadline for submitting your application is **12.00 noon on Monday 19th February 2024**. Please check with your chosen university for local deadlines which will be earlier in the year.

UNIVERSITY POINTS OF CONTACT

If you have any queries about applying for a studentship award or require copies of policies, please contact the administrator at your chosen SEDarc university in the first instance:

- Kingston University: hssce-research@kingston.ac.uk
- Royal Holloway, University of London: esrcdtp@rhul.ac.uk
- University of Kent: kentgrc@kent.ac.uk
- University of Reading: doctoralstudentshipsofficer@reading.ac.uk
- University of Surrey: doctoralcollege@surrey.ac.uk
- University of Sussex: doctoralfunding@sussex.ac.uk