![Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities logo — SCOTTISH GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR ARTS & HUMANITIES, Sgoil Ceumnachaidh na h-Alba airson Ealain agus Daonnachdan]

SGSAH Applied Research Collaborative Studentships 2025

GUIDANCE

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities Applied Research Collaborative Studentship competition for an **October 2025** start. This document summarises the SGSAH ARCS programme and provides guidance for both HEI and industry partners applicants.

Process for 2025/26:

- Submission of full application by the lead supervisor between 3 February 2025 and 14 February 2025.
- ARCS Review Panel selection of applications for provisional award of doctoral funding by early April 2025.
- Successful applications to nominate and recruit a suitably qualified doctoral candidate to undertake the project before final confirmation of funding.
- Doctoral candidates to commence study in October 2025.

Please note funding is subject to confirmation of a suitably qualified doctoral candidate. Exceptionally, a candidate may be attached to the full application. Nominated doctoral candidates will complete Nominated Doctoral Candidate forms by 17 June 2025 (an earlier deadline of 23 April 2025 is set for successful applications which have an attached candidate). A sub-committee of the SGSAH Executive will review nominations to confirm that candidates meet the required criteria.

The ARCS scheme funds doctoral research projects that are developed in collaboration with external organisations across creative, heritage, third and business sectors based in Scotland.

The ARCS scheme is open to applications from SGSAH HEI members as below:
- Abertay University
- Edinburgh Napier University
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Glasgow School of Art
- Heriot-Watt University
- Queen Margaret University
- Robert Gordon University
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- University of Aberdeen
- University of Dundee
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Glasgow
- University of St Andrews
- University of Stirling
- University of Strathclyde
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- University of the West of Scotland

Each application must have two HEIs and one external partner. For 2025, all applications to the ARCS scheme must include at least one of the following HEIs:

- Abertay University
- Edinburgh Napier University
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Heriot Watt University
- Queen Margaret University Edinburgh
- Robert Gordon University
- University of the West of Scotland

Completed applications should be submitted via the online platform by 14 February 2025, by 12pm GMT.

Late applications will only be considered where there is evidenced breakdown in SGSAH's operational systems and where such systemic failures have made submission by the deadline impossible. Please note that we will **not** accept late applications where there has been failure at the applicant's end (e.g., failure of internet connection). For this reason, **we strongly advise applicants to complete the application process at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline.**

For further information or clarification, please contact enquiries@sgsah.ac.uk

2. The Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities

The ARCS programme is managed by SGSAH. Our aim is to work together to nurture and inspire a future generation of enlightened leaders committed to generating and mobilising new insights across scholarly, professional and public communities. Our doctoral graduates will be capable, caring, ethical & reflective professionals. They will be alert to their influence and impact as knowledge makers, co-creators and connectors and guided in their actions by what we stand for: Respect, Integrity, Creativity, and Collaboration. They will be champions for arts and humanities research, demonstrating through their work the value of arts and humanities to society, industry and other disciplines.

Our ARCS-funded PhD projects will be markers of excellence and originality, enabled by environments where excellent research is supported and conducted. Our prestigious 3½ year ARCS studentships offer:

- Fully funded PhD studentships with a stipend of around £20,300 per annum plus fees at UKRI rate
- Partnership with a non-academic organisation and cross-institutional supervisory team including a minimum of six months working within the non-academic organisation
- Access to additional funding to cover travel between partner organisations

- A core training programme to develop the doctoral researcher's skills as a future research leader
- Access to advanced inter/disciplinary training through SGSAH's innovative Discipline+ Catalysts
- Connection and collaboration with organisations across the creative, cultural and heritage sectors through SGSAH's three Knowledge Exchange Hubs.
- Access to extra funds to gain additional skills through training
- Access to the richness of Scotland's research expertise and collections
- Opportunities to join an engaged and committed cohort of doctoral researchers working across the full range of arts & humanities disciplines
- Opportunities to lead development of networks and funded training events across Scotland
- Membership of the SGSAH – a partnership of 17 HEIs in Scotland supporting 1,750 doctoral researchers in the Arts & Humanities

I've been given opportunities to run events, learn languages, think about my future career and meet a great support network of friends. It makes you feel part of a larger community. (Doctoral Researcher)

3. Applied Research Collaborative Studentships

ARCS are intended to encourage and develop collaboration between SGSAH's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and non-HEI organisations and businesses across Scotland.

ARCS provide opportunities for doctoral students to gain first hand professional experience outside the academic environment. The support provided by both an HEI and non-HEI supervisor enhances the employment-related skills and training a research student gains over the duration of their award.

It is important that collaboration brings more to the student than enhanced access to an archive or collection, and that they are afforded real opportunities to develop career enhancing skills in addition to an academic qualification.

The studentships also encourage and establish longer-term links between the partners that can have benefits for both, providing access to resources and materials, knowledge and expertise that may not otherwise have been available and also provide social, cultural and economic benefits to wider society.

Applicants should consider that one of the main aims of the ARCS is to offer students enhanced benefits to their research, experience, training and skills development. There will be different skills on offer, and varying contributions to be made by the HEI and non-HEI organisations and supervisors. There are also potentially greater demands placed upon students in that they will be involved with two sets of supervisors, colleagues and working environments. Having clear lines of communication and an understanding of requirements and responsibilities by all parties should minimise any conflict or tension that may arise.

A good collaborative partnership and project will enable a framework for doctoral students to undertake research with all the necessary support and resources readily available and procedures in place to monitor and manage the project.

Students undertaking ARCS-funded projects will also be supported through access to a 3½ year core-training programme, joining the SGSAH AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership funded students.

4. SGSAH ARCS Doctoral Training and Development Framework

The ARCS Training & Development Framework runs alongside our AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership programme. This enables ARCS funded doctoral researchers to join our AHRC DTP doctoral researchers.

Our Training & Development Framework offers an inclusive and flexible blend of core and bespoke opportunities cutting across and connecting disciplinary, methodological, academic and external contexts. This design recognises and responds to the increased diversification of doctoral approaches in the arts and humanities as well as acknowledging the multiple and diverse skills required to be a successful researcher.

We have four pillars which run throughout our doctoral training programme. These are: Foundation, Core, Specialist and Partnership.

4.1 Foundation: Professional Researcher consists of courses foundational to the development of the professional researcher. Normally delivered via the home-HEI, completion is mandatory. Content may include; planning and managing research; research ethics, integrity, values and behaviour; intellectual property and copyright; data management; and communications.

4.2 Core: Leadership Programme is a developmental course that will equip our ARCS doctoral researchers to become ethical leaders and influencers in their chosen career paths. Topics may include equality and diversity, wellbeing, communication, fellowships, grant writing, career pathways, and publishing. Running through the Leadership Programme is our annual Summer School, which offers over 40 workshops delivered by our members. As the core offer of our doctoral partnership and the mechanism through which we facilitate a peer community, participation is a requirement.

It's been a fantastic opportunity to get to know the other members of the cohort, to share ideas, fears and build relations. (Doctoral Researcher)

4.3 Specialist: Discipline+ Catalysts support the pursuit of knowledge and advancement of disciplines through regular methodological and thematic training at the leading edges of arts and humanities. Our Catalysts also drive cross and interdisciplinary collaborations with the sciences and social sciences and support student-led events funded through Cohort Development Funding. ARCS doctoral researchers must participate in at least one Catalyst event annually.

4.4 Partnership: Knowledge Exchange (KE) Hubs SGSAH runs three KE Hubs: Citizenship, Culture and Ethics Hub, Creative Economies Hub and the Heritage Hub. Supported by key partners including the BBC, V&A, British Council, and the Scottish Parliament, these deliver industry-focused events, internships and work-based learning within a UK and international context. ARCS doctoral researchers must participate in at least one Hub event annually.

In addition to the four key training pillars summarised above, we provide opportunities for individual and collective training.

4.5 Individual: Skills Development allows doctoral researchers to apply for funding to support individual training and development needs. Key funding streams include:
- Doctoral Internship/ Artist in Residence (three months additional stipend for funded students with travel and accommodation as required).
- Specialist training (course costs/fees, travel and accommodation and additional stipend where appropriate).
- Language learning (additional stipend to cover time, and funding to cover course costs).
- Knowledge Exchange & Impact: available to support collaborative research approaches and dissemination of findings.
- Conference attendance.

4.6 Collective: Cohort Development Funding (CDF) up to £2,500 is available for doctoral researchers to collaborate on designing and managing the delivery of inter/disciplinary, generic, careers-focused events. Recent workshops and events supported via CDF include:
- Folklore in the Landscape
- Unlearning and Relearning: Exploring and Contributing to Decolonial Methodologies
- Scottish Epistemology Early Careers Researchers Pre-Read Workshop
- Podcasting Your PhD
- Transgender: International/ Intersectional
- Blogging Bootcamp

SGSAH requires its ARCS-funded students to: -
- complete foundational training as required by the lead-HEI
- complete our Core Leadership Programme consisting of an induction, one residential event for each full-time year of study, a symposium in year two and our annual Summer Schools
- become a member of and participate in at least one Discipline+ Catalyst event and one KE Hub event per annum.

5. Applied Research Collaboration Studentships Guidance

5.1 Introduction
1. The SGSAH Applied Research Collaboration Studentship (ARCS) scheme has run since 2019 and committed to making up to 21 awards between 2019-25.
2. ARCS are supported by the Scottish Funding Council, which meets 50% of costs of each 3½ year studentship and additional funding for training needs. The remaining 50% of costs will be met by the HEIs with each contributing 25% of the costs The award includes a stipend of around £19,600 per annum plus fees at UKRI rates. We expect to make approximately three ARCS awards each year.
3. ARCS are doctoral projects designed and supervised by two SGSAH Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and at least one other non-academic partner. At least one of the HEIs must be Abertay, Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow Caledonian, Heriot-Watt, Queen Margaret, Robert Gordon or the University of West of Scotland.

4. ARCS projects must be within the Arts and Humanities.

5. ARCS projects must demonstrate mutual benefit for all partners and the doctoral researcher. They offer opportunities for:
   - Doctoral researchers to undertake innovative training and applied research experience as well as access to expertise and resources not available within an academic setting.
   - Partner organisations to work with highly motivated doctoral researchers on development of cutting-edge research addressed to their organisation's needs and priorities.
   - HEIs to demonstrate societal or economic impact through collaboration
   - SGSAH to strengthen existing partnerships or develop new ones which may have benefit for other doctoral researchers
   - Scotland to build its HEI networks and research capacity
   - Everyone to build new research collaborations.
6. Doctoral researchers will be supported by academic and partner supervisors.

5.2 Scheme Summary
7. Studentships will be 3½ years full-time. Part-time equivalent is possible if the HEIs and non-academic partner(s) are confident that the needs of the project can still be met, and that supervision can be provided for the duration.

8. Whilst studentships are principally based within the academic partner institution, there is a mandatory placement, which must be relevant to the research project, at the non-academic partner for a minimum of 6 months and up to 18 months.

9. 50% of fees, studentship and training provision will be met by the Scottish Funding Council. The remaining 50% will be met by the HEI(s), with each HEI contributing 25% of the costs.

10. The non-academic partner contribution is £500 per annum (i.e. £1750 over 3.5 years). This will be used by SGSAH to support additional studentship costs. In-kind support is also expected in addition to supervisory expertise and project management, e.g., desk space, access to appropriate resources including email, formal mentoring, tailored training opportunities, etc.

11. Students can also apply to SGSAH for funding for additional individual skills development.

12. For the purposes of the management of the doctoral degree, the appointed doctoral researcher will register with one HEI – hereafter referred to as the 'lead HEI'. The Lead Supervisor must be based at the lead HEI, although supervision practice may take the form of co- or secondary supervision. The degree awarded will be from the lead HEI.

13. The arrangements for supervision in terms of weighting, and the split of fees between partner HEIs are matters for each partnership to determine in relation to the supervisory weightings though both HEIs contribute equally (25%/25%) to the match-funding.

14. The lead institution will be responsible for ensuring that the agreed supervision plan is adhered to, and that appropriate monitoring and progress meetings and reports are taking place.

5.3 Partnership Eligibility
1. HEIs listed in Section 1 of this Guidance are participating in this year's ARCS competition. All applications must have two HEIs attached, at least one of whom must be from the following: Abertay, Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow Caledonian, Heriot-Watt, Queen Margaret, Robert Gordon or the University of West of Scotland.

2. Institutions identified as the 'lead HEI' in the application are permitted to submit a maximum of two applications as lead HEI to the competition per year.

3. Partner organisations must be located in Scotland or have operations of some kind in Scotland. They can be any size and from the public, private or voluntary sectors, but must have sufficient capacity to support a doctoral researcher for the duration of their programme of study and the placement experience must be meaningful and valuable.

4. Partnerships may be with any organisation and priority will not be given to particular types or sectors.

5. The doctoral researcher must be supervised by at least two academic supervisors (at least one from each named HEI) and at least one supervisor from the partner organisation. The make-up and operation of the supervisory team will be determined by the partnership; with priorities for the student to receive excellent supervisory support and for meaningful partnerships with the industry organisation. Reviewers will be looking for the impact the project and studentship will have on the HEIs' research activities and capacities and how the project aligns with priorities and strategies.

6. Academic supervisors should not be supervising more than 6 FTE doctoral researchers.

7. One member of the proposed academic supervisory team must have previously supervised at least one doctoral candidate to successful completion. This need not be the Lead supervisor.

8. All academic supervisors must have completed supervisory training.

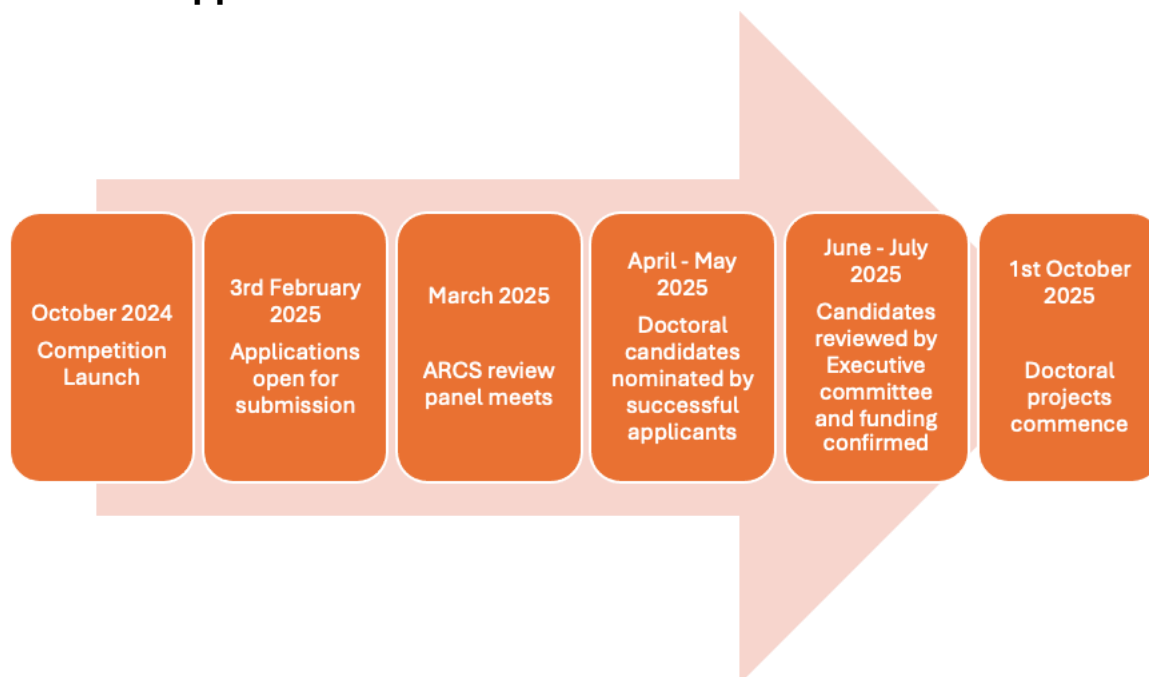9. All supervisors, including the partner supervisor, must attend a SGSAH Supervisors' training event.

5.4 Student eligibility and recruitment

10. ARCS are awarded provisionally to HEIs and their partners and are subject to the recruitment, nomination and confirmation of qualified doctoral candidates.

    In addition to UK students, international students are eligible for an ARCS studentship, including the full stipend. SFC's maximum contribution to fees will be 50% of the home rate only, i.e., if applicable, partnerships should agree as to whether they will require to fund the difference between Home and International fee status or waive the difference.

11. A candidate may be attached to the project at the point of application submission, but the attachment of a candidate will not form part of the application review process.

12. Nominated doctoral candidates will complete and submit a Nominated Doctoral Candidate online proforma to SGSAH by 23 April 2025 (see template in Appendix 2).

13. Nominated candidates must have been accepted onto the PhD programme of the lead HEI.

14. A sub-committee of the SGSAH Executive will review all nominations to confirm that nominated candidates meet the required criteria. Only at this point will the awards be confirmed.

6. ARCS Application Process Timeline

October 2024 Competition Launch	3rd February 2025 Applications open for submission	March 2025 ARCS review panel meets	April - May 2025 Doctoral candidates nominated by successful applicants	June - July 2025 Candidates reviewed by Executive committee and funding confirmed	1st October 2025 Doctoral projects commence

7. Application Guidance

The following guidance maps onto the ARCS application form. Applicants are advised to read this and ensure they are using the most up-to-date version before completing and submitting the ARCS online application.

1. **Partnership Information**

   All ARCS projects should have at least two academic supervisors drawn from across two SGSAH HEIs and one partner supervisor. At least one of the HEIs must come from the following group: Abertay, Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow Caledonian, Heriot-Watt, Queen Margaret, Robert Gordon or the University of West of Scotland. Contact details for the partner organisation would normally be the proposed partner supervisor. In some instances, there may be more than two academic supervisors and/or more than one partner organisation. Where this is the case, further details should be added as necessary.

2. **Partner Organisation (300 Words)**

   Summary of the partner organisation(s)'s core activity/business and capacity to undertake partnership and support a doctoral project. Partner organisation(s) can come from any sector and be located anywhere in Scotland. We are looking for a concise summary of the partner's core activity/business, as panel reviewers may not be familiar with their work. Please use this section to demonstrate organisational capacity to support a project at the doctoral scale. You may wish to include staffing numbers, organisational structure, operational longevity etc.

3. **Title of Doctoral Project**

4. **Research Summary (100 words)**

   Summary of the proposed research project that will be comprehensible to non-specialists and suitable for PR and communication purposes.

5. **Research Proposal (1000 words)**

   We are seeking original, innovative, cogent and coherent proposals that fall clearly within the domain of arts and humanities research and which are feasible within 3½ years. We expect our funded doctoral researchers to submit their theses within the funded period. This section should describe the research proposal and include:

   - Research Question(s)/problem. Academic impact should be clearly stated with demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory and application.
   - Research context, methods and sources, originality, innovation and contribution to knowledge. Methodology should be demonstrably appropriate with proposal well-grounded in current research literature and/or practice.
   - Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement & Impact. Proposal should also demonstrate plans to ensure project benefits can be transferred, exploited or exchanged within and beyond immediate partnerships. We use the UKRI definition of impact, which also includes public engagement. UKRI offers useful examples of impact on its website.

6. **Benefits to partner (200 words)**

   ARCS must demonstrate clear benefits to partners and must be delivered through genuine partnership. We encourage applicants to work together to ensure that the project will be of genuine value and that each partner's requirements are understood, addressed and feasible.

7. **Benefits to HEIs (200 words)**

   How will the partnership deliver benefits to the HEIs, and/or to particular units, Schools or research configurations. Please demonstrate how the proposal aligns with partnership strategy/research priorities. What will this project/partnership add to the research environment, critical capacity, etc.? Where the project builds on an existing collaborative relationship between any or all of the members of the proposed partnership, outline how the project will further develop these.

8. **Supervision Arrangements**

   We are seeking factual information about the supervisory team. The supervisory team refers to the academic supervisors and a supervisor appointed from the partner organisation. There should be at least two academic supervisors drawn from across two HEIs, one of whom should be designated the Lead Supervisor.

The Lead Supervisor should be located at the lead-HEI, i.e., the HEI from which the doctoral candidate will graduate.

To ensure the doctoral researcher will receive excellent, relevant support, we invite each academic supervisor to include up to 6 relevant research outputs. 'Outputs' refers to publications, practice-based research including performances, exhibitions, compositions, etc. This requirement is indicative and not intended to discourage early career researchers (ECR) from acting as Lead, Co- or Secondary supervisors. SGSAH welcomes and supports the development of ECRs through its DTP programme. ECRs listing less than 6 relevant outputs will not be disadvantaged by the review process.

Normally, doctoral supervisors should supervise no more than 6 FTE doctoral researchers. Where a proposed supervisor will be supervising more than 6 FTE, a compelling mitigating rationale must be provided.

Supervisor details from the partner organisation should include any relevant experience in relation to supervising or collaborating on research projects, previous or current partnership working with HEIs, mentoring doctoral interns etc.

9. **Supervisory expertise and research training environment (800 words)**
   We seek demonstrable and persuasive evidence that the supervisory arrangements offer the PhD student the best training environment possible and one which meets the needs of the project. A priority for ARCS is that they should provide opportunities for the doctoral researcher to gain first hand professional experience outside the university environment and offer enhanced employment-related skills and training. A key fundable criterion for ARCS is: could this project happen without the engagement of and contributions from the partner organisation? If the project could be undertaken without the partner's active involvement - if it is not demonstrably applied research - it is not an ARCS.

   In this section:
   - Describe why this is the right supervisory team. What expertise does this particular team bring to this project, and what is the added value offered by this particular partnership which demonstrates that it is an applied research collaborative studentship? What role will each supervisor, including the supervisor from the partner organisation, play in ensuring the doctoral researcher and their project are supported?
   - Outline the value of the partnership, and why the partner organisation is essential to the success of the project (i.e., it could not be undertaken without their input.)
   - Describe how the research environment and partnership will support the doctoral researcher and the project. What necessary and potentially unique resources are available to the doctoral researcher across the HEI and partner organisation e.g., non-public collections and archives, placement experience,

equipment etc. and how are these essential to the successful completion of the project? Why is the partner organisation essential to the success of the project, i.e., why could this not be undertaken without their input? What is the 'added value' offered by this partnership, which demonstrates that it is a collaborative doctoral project?

- Consider enhanced training and skills development that the doctoral researcher will benefit from across the partnership. This training may not be directly related to the PhD project but is likely to enhance the doctoral researcher's employability skills.

- Review partnership arrangements that will be put in place to support the doctoral researcher in developing enhanced employment-related skills. What professional experiences will be provided via the partner? Please note that there is an expectation that the doctoral researcher will spend at least six months and up to 18 months hosted by the partner organisation.

10. Project Management (300 words)

ARCS are complex to manage, given that they require the development of trusted and sustainable relationships across organisations and typically involve more people in their delivery and management than other types of PhD projects. In this section, we seek evidence of clear project management, risk mitigation and contingency planning. Please outline:

- How the project will be managed and resourced, and what supervisory arrangements will be in place, including meetings and communications.

- How the partner supervisor will be supported and where an ECR is a member of the supervisory team, how they will be mentored.

- How the student's time in the partner organisation will be managed (e.g., inductions, office space, mentoring, etc.)?

- Agreed milestones and how these will be measured, with consideration of how the team of supervisors and student will be assured of adequate progress.

- How any concerns or disputes which might arise over the duration of the project will be managed, including contingency plans in the event of the supervisor leaving the partner organisation, or the partner organisation no longer being able to support the project.

11. Partnership Agreement (200 words)

A key challenge for collaborative doctoral projects concerns intellectual property rights. Whilst we do not expect you to have a formal Partnership Agreement in place in advance of being awarded the funding, we do want to know how such an agreement will be produced, and what it is likely to cover. Please note, SGSAH will require Partnership Agreements for its ARCS projects to be in place by December 2025.

Please indicate the processes by which a formal partnership agreement between partners will be put in place and summarise the anticipated key elements of this

agreement (e.g., intellectual property ownership, financial contributions, confidentiality clauses etc.)

12. **Ethics and Research Integrity (300 words)**
Any project funded by SGSAH must be ethical. In this section, you should identify any ethical or safety issues attached to the research project or to the associated impact plans and how these will be addressed. Please do consider this carefully as any project, including in its impact plans, which is considered not to have addressed ethical issues will be deemed to be not fundable. Please note that Ethics and Integrity is not scored within the competition process, but it is important that this section of the form is given due consideration in order to indicate the proposal's feasibility.

13. **Studentship Recruitment (200 words)**
We need to be confident that the projects selected for funding are able to recruit excellent candidates. Please use this section to:
- Demonstrate your assessment of the likely pool of applicants for this project and how you intend to reach them. Consideration of how many students might be interested, and how your partnership will attract them to the award. Details of how your recruitment will take into account Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles.
- Summarise how you will advertise the studentship and recruit the student to ensure the best doctoral candidate nomination is made. The recruitment process should be transparent and fair to ensure the best student is nominated. Where the review panel has serious concerns about recruitment plans, the project will be deemed to be un-fundable.

Doctoral Candidates must meet excellence criteria as below:
- Hold at least a 2:1 undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline.
- Have completed or on course to complete a master's degree in a relevant discipline/ and/or demonstrate equivalent, relevant professional experience.
- Be able to demonstrate preparedness for the proposed, specific collaborative doctoral project.
- They must also have undertaken, with the full supervisory team, an assessment of their existing skills and skills needs.

In some cases, the project may have been initiated and developed with a proposed doctoral candidate, as appropriate to their very particular skills set and expertise. In such cases, it would not be appropriate to advertise the studentship. Where a student is attached, applicants should indicate this by writing "Nominated Doctoral Candidate already in place".

Please note:

- Nominated candidates are required to submit a completed ARCS Nominated Doctoral Candidate form to SGSAH by 23 April 2025. See Appendix 2.
- Nominated candidates must have been accepted onto the PhD programme of the lead-HEI.
- Before funding is confirmed, a sub-committee of SGSAH Executive will review the nominated doctoral candidates and confirm that they meet the excellence criteria. Please be advised that where a nominated candidate is not felt to meet these criteria, funding will not be awarded. If you are not able to recruit and nominate a strong candidate, to avoid disappointment of all concerned, you are strongly advised to withdraw your application. You are advised to tell the candidate that they are the 'nominated candidate' rather than having funding confirmed, in case the sub-committee of the SGSAH committee is not able to endorse the nominated candidate.

14. Confirmation of supervisory requirements

SGSAH has minimum requirements for the supervisory teams of its funded doctoral researchers. These can be found [here]. Please ensure that your proposed team meets these minimum requirements otherwise your application will be deemed ineligible.

Signatures and Confirmations:
- Applications must be signed by the Lead Supervisor
- Confirmation must be provided that the application is supported by SGSAH Executive members from the two HEIs.
- Applications must detail the proposed supervisor from the partner organisation.

15. Submitting the application

Lead Supervisors can submit the full application between 3 – 14 February 2025 via the ARCS submission [platform]. The deadline is 14 February, 12pm GMT. Late applications will only be considered where there is evidenced breakdown in SGSAH's operational systems and where such systemic failures have made submission by the deadline impossible. Please note we will not accept late applications where there has been failure at the applicant's end (e.g. failure of internet connection). For this reason, **we strongly advise applicants to complete the application process at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline**.

Advice from reviewers assessing previous applications:
- Applications were either very strong in the collaborative aspect but lacked academic rigour or vice versa.
- Questions asked under supervisory fit were not always addressed.

- Statements from supervisory teams such as 'world leading' were not evidenced.
- Some applications did not fully address how the student would be managed.
- The strength of the partnership (between external organisation, HEI and researcher) should be emphasised whilst also addressing how the proposed project is of PhD level in scale and rigour.
- The external organisation/partner should be situated at the core of ARCS applications, as a central element of the partnership project.

16. What happens next?

All applications submitted to the ARCS scheme will be reviewed by an ARCS Panel comprised of academic colleagues drawn from across the SGSAH HEI members and colleagues across a range of partner organisations. The Panel will review and recommend to the SGSAH Executive committee up to three applications be awarded funding subject to recruitment of a qualified doctoral candidate. We expect to be able to advise HEIs of the outcome in early April 2025. Applications which are successful should then implement their recruitment process, as outlined in their application. Nominated doctoral candidates who are already attached to the project should be put forward by 23 April 2025. Recruited doctoral candidates should be put forward by 17 June 2025. Nominations will then be reviewed and approved by the Executive. Candidates originally attached to projects will be notified in mid-May 2025, candidates recruited after projects have been awarded will be notified by early July 2025. Approved candidates will commence study in October 2025.

8. ARCS Nominated Doctoral Candidates Guidance

Requirements

Applications to be submitted by 23 April 2025 for attached students or 17 June 2025 for recruited candidates. Late submissions will not be accepted. Please include:

- Confirmation of your offer on the Doctoral Programme from your lead-HEI.
- Full transcript of your qualifications in English (and where necessary a certified translation should be provided).

Residency criteria

All funded PhD students whether UK or International will be eligible for a full award, both a stipend to support living costs, and fees at UKRI rate. If applicable, partnerships should agree as to whether the student will require to fund the difference between Home and International fee status or waive the difference.

To be classed as a home student, candidates 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 the candidate does not meet the criteria above, they would be classed as an international student.

Guidance for Applicants

1. Qualifications

We expect candidates to have completed or to be studying towards a Postgraduate Masters qualification in a relevant subject. If you are not in this position, you must use the 'Relevant professional experience' section to provide evidence that the training and development you have received is equivalent to that obtained through a master's course in a relevant subject and, therefore, prepares you to continue to doctoral study.

2. Non-standard and/or unclassified qualifications

We recognise that some applicants will have completed degrees which are non-standard or unclassified (i.e., Pass/Fail only) or, for contextual reasons, an Ordinary rather than an Honours Degree. Where this is the case, you should still complete the qualifications section and invite your Lead Supervisor to confirm the quality of the work by making reference to the examiner's report (e.g., excellent and publishable; strong and of near-publishable standard).

3. **Relevant professional experience (300 words maximum)**
   This section is intended to provide a level playing field for applicants with unrelated or no master's qualifications but who have demonstrably relevant professional experience. It should only be completed by candidates who:
   - Do not have and are not studying towards a Master's degree or equivalent.
   - Are returning to master's study after a considerable break in higher education.
   - Have gained a master's degree more than five years previously.
   - Have a Master's degree that is not in a relevant subject.
   - **AND** you have significant professional experience, which is relevant to your research proposal.

   Whilst we do not wish to discriminate against applicants who may not previously have had the opportunity to study at postgraduate level, you should be aware that a doctoral degree is rigorous training at the highest academic level. If you are completing this section, please provide evidence that any training and development you have received is equivalent to that obtained through a master's course and therefore prepares you to continue to doctoral study.

4. **Preparedness for proposed doctoral project (300 words maximum)**
   Please demonstrate how your previous study (Undergraduate / Masters) and / or professional experience have prepared you for this particular doctoral project. This might include reference to your UG and master's programmes of study and your dissertation topics, specific and appropriate methodological training and/or expertise (e.g., proficiency in a relevant language, particular IT skills etc.), work-based learning or employment in a relevant occupation, etc.

5. **Training needs (300 words maximum)**
   However well-prepared applicants may be to undertake their proposed research, it is expected that they will develop new skills during their programme of study.
   - With your supervisory team, please indicate your training needs. What skills will you need to develop to ensure that you are able to complete this research project successfully? (Your project is likely to build on and extend existing skills and will be project specific.)
   - What skills do you seek to develop for professional development purposes?
   - How will you meet the needs and develop the skills noted above? What resources and/or opportunities will you access across your ARCS partnership, and from the SGSAH training opportunities beyond the core requirement?

6. **SGSAH Requirements**
   All SGSAH ARCS funded doctoral researchers are required to participate in core training elements provided by SGSAH. Key mechanisms for delivery of this training include Knowledge Exchange (KE) Hubs and Discipline+ Catalysts. You

will become a member of at least one KE Hub, and as an ARCS doctoral researcher, you may also wish to join a Discipline+ Catalyst. Please see further information here.

Contact details for SGSAH: enquiries@sgsah.ac.uk

Appendix 1: Template for SGSAH ARCS Application 2025

Please note that applications will be made online.

Partnership Information

Lead-HEI (higher education institution at which the PhD student will be registered):

Collaborating HEI (this is a requirement of the scheme)**:**

Partner organisation (Where there is more than one collaborating partner, please provide additional details):

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1. **Partner Organisations (300 words)**
Summary of Partner Organisation(s) core activity/business and capacity to undertake this partnership/host a PhD student for the length of the project.

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2. Title of Doctoral Project:

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3. **Research Summary (100 words)**
Summary of the proposed research project that will be comprehensible to non-specialists and suitable for PR and communication channels.

4. **Research Proposal (1,000 words)**
Summary of:
- *Research question(s)/problem*
- *Research context, methods and sources, originality/innovation and contribution to knowledge*
- *Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement & Impact*

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5. **Benefits to partner (200 words)**
ARCS must demonstrate clear benefits to the partner. Summary of
- *How the research project as conceived contributes to delivery of the partner organisation's strategic goals*
- *How the project fits with the partner's priorities and needs*
- *How the project will benefit the partner*

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6. **Benefits to HEIs (200 words)**
Summary of:
- *Strategic alignment between partners*
- *Added value to the HEIs' research environment and partnership opportunities*
- *Benefits and potential further developments*

7. Supervision Arrangements
Each proposal must be supported by at least two academic supervisors designated as Primary/Lead Supervisor, Co-supervisors and/or Secondary Supervisor. Please add all members of the proposed supervisory team.

Lead Supervisor (must come from the lead-HEI)
Name:

Institution:

Email:

Discipline:

ECR (within six years of their first academic appointment): Yes/No

Supervision allocation (please indicate)

75% ☐

60% ☐

50% ☐

Total number of doctoral researchers supervising currently (as FTE):

Up to six most relevant research outputs:

Academic Supervisor 2
Name:

Institution:

Email:

Discipline:

ECR (within six years of their first academic appointment): Yes/No

Supervision allocation (please indicate)

25% ☐

40% ☐

50% ☐

Total Number of students supervising currently (as FTE):

Up to six most relevant research outputs:

Partner Supervisor

Name:
Email:
Organisation:
Position:
Relevant experience:

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8. Supervisory expertise, research training environment and benefits to student (800 words)
 Summary of:
 - *Strengths of the supervisory team for this project*
 - *Value of the partnership*
 - *Research environment and partnership and how it will support doctoral researcher and the project*
 - *Training and skills development*

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9. Project Management (300 words)
 Project plan including summery of:
 - *How the project and supervisory team will be managed and supported*
 - *Measures and milestones*
 - *Management and contingency planning*

10. Partnership Agreement (200 words)
  Summary of:
  - *Processes by which a formal partnership agreement will be put in place*
  - *Anticipated key elements of the agreement.*

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11. Ethics and Research Integrity (300 words)
  Summary of:
  - *Any identified ethical or safety issues attached to this research project* **or** *impact plans with indication of how these will be addressed*

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12. Studentship Recruitment (200 words)
  Summary of:
  - *Assessment of the likely pool of applicants for this project and how you intend to reach it.*
  - *How you will advertise the studentship and recruit the student to ensure the best doctoral candidate nomination is made.*

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13. Confirmation of supervisory requirements

One of the proposed academic supervisors has previously supervised at least one doctoral candidate to successful completion. ☐

All academic supervisors have completed supervisory training for new supervisors before commencement of the studentship.   ☐

All academic supervisors have completed an Updating Workshop/Briefing session in the past four years.   ☐

SGSAH Supervisors' Induction: *All supervisors and doctoral researchers of ARCS must attend a SGASH Supervisors' Workshop. SGSAH will contact successful teams with the dates in due course.*

Appendix 2: Template SGSAH ARCS Nominated Doctoral Candidate

SGSAH ARCS Collaborative Doctoral Award Nominated Doctoral Candidate

ARCS Nominated Doctoral Candidates will be required to submit this information online, confirmation of their offer of a place on the Doctoral Programme from their lead-HEI, and a full transcript of qualifications in English (and where necessary a certified translation should be provided) by **23 April 2025 (for attached doctoral candidates) or 17 June 2025 (for recruited doctoral candidates).**

 Late submission of the Nominated Doctoral Candidate form will not be accepted.

Name	
Email	
Permanent Address	
Correspondence Address if different	

1. Residency Eligibility   *Please indicate whether you are classed by your HEI as a home or international student.*

PhD Programme of Study

Institution at which you will be registered (the lead institution) and which has confirmed your place on the PhD Programme.	

Research proposal title:

Partner Organisation:

2. Qualifications

University or College	Dates of award	Degree/Diploma	Main subjects	Grade, Class or GPA

Qualifications pending

University or College	Anticipated date of award	Degree/Diploma	Main subjects

3. Non-standard and/or unclassified qualifications
Lead Supervisor to confirm quality of the work by making reference to the examiner's report. Please see application guidance.

4. Relevant professional experience (300 words maximum)

Provide evidence that you are prepared for doctoral study only if:

- *You do not have and are not studying towards a Master's degree or equivalent*
- *or are returning to master's study after a considerable break in higher education*
- *or gained a Master's degree more than five years previously*
- *or if your Master's degree is not in a relevant subject*
- *AND you have significant professional experience, which is relevant to your research proposal.*

5. Preparedness for proposed doctoral project (300 words maximum)

Summary of how you have prepared for this doctoral project, i.e.

- *reference to your UG and master's programmes of study and your dissertation topics, specific and appropriate methodological training and/or expertise*
- *work-based learning or employment in a relevant occupation, etc*

6. Training needs (300 words maximum)

Summary of:

- *Training needs*
- *Professional development purposes*
- *Methodology for meeting needs and developing skills noted above*
- *Resources and/or opportunities will you access beyond the core requirement*

7.Environmental Impact Assessment

As part of SGSAH's 'Green/Graduate Strategy & Operations Plan' we have committed to reducing the environmental impact of doctoral research in the arts and humanities, including sustainable travel practices, conference attendance, and fieldwork activities. To ensure the sustainability of doctoral research projects applicants are asked to confirm that they will undertake appropriate measures to reduce the impact of their research activities. Successful applicants will be supported through guidance and training.

[tick box] I confirm that as part of my annual progress review (year 1 fulltime; year 1 or 2 part-time) I will identify measures to ensure the sustainability of my doctoral research activities.

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8. SGSAH Requirements

All SGSAH ARCS funded doctoral researchers are required to participate in core training elements provided by SGSAH. Key mechanisms for delivery of this training include Knowledge Exchange (KE) Hubs and Disciplinary+ Catalysts. Information about these can be found in the Guidance.

You must be a member of at least one KE Hub. Please indicate which KE Hub(s) you will join:

Citizenship, Culture and Ethics ☐

Creative Economies ☐

Heritage ☐

As an ARCS doctoral researcher, you may also wish to be a member of a Disciplinary+ Catalyst. Please indicate which Catalyst(s) you wish to join:

Archaeology and Classics ☐

Creative Arts and Design ☐

Cultural and Museum Studies ☐

History ☐

Law ☐

Linguistics ☐

Media, Comms, Film & TV ☐

Modern Languages ☐

Celtic Studies ☐

Philosophy ☐

Literature ☐

Theology, Divinity & Religion	☐

Data storage: Anonymised, limited special characteristic data (such as disability, ethnicity, other health data) will be collected and retained by SGSAH in order to fulfil our contractual obligations to our funder, the Scottish Funding Council.

Applications from nominees not in receipt of funding will be destroyed by 1 October 2025. Applications from nominees in receipt of funding will be retained for the duration of the studentship. This application may be read by up to eighteen reviewers.

Appendix 3: Assessment criteria for SGSAH ARCS

We seek to provide up to three ARCS awards in 2025 to applications deemed to be of excellent quality. We have developed a set of criteria to help us to make difficult decisions in a transparent way. In essence, the questions we ask are:

- Why this research project?
- Why this partnership?
- Why this supervisory team?
- Are the right structures and mechanisms in place to support the timely submission of an excellent thesis?
- Have ethical issues been adequately identified and addressed?
- Is a clear recruitment process in place?

Marks are organised into broad bands A-D. Reviewers are asked to allocate precise marks within each band. (SGSAH staff will assess qualifications). Total marks available for award are 24.

1. Quality of Research Proposal

Band	Mark	Description
A	8 7	An exceptional proposal in all of its components. Research questions are clear/cogent, and the proposal demonstrates a comprehensive awareness of the research context and the contribution that the project will make to the field and partner organisation. A clear gap in existing knowledge has been identified and a compelling case made for the significance of addressing this gap. The proposal is original and innovative, the methods are appropriate, and the project is feasible within the timescale of 3½ years. Any ethical/safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. The proposal is compelling.
B	6 5	A strong proposal with clear and cogent research questions and a sense of the contribution that the research will make, combined with appropriate methods. The research is likely to be feasible within the timescale of 3½ years. Any ethical/safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed. A good case is made for the proposal.
C	4 3	A solid proposal with researchable questions, appropriately identified sources and an appropriate methodology. There is some awareness of its intellectual importance. The research may be feasible within the period of supervised study. Any ethical/safety issues have been identified and appropriately addressed.
D	2 1	A proposal with serious shortcomings in one or more of its aspects.

2. Knowledge Exchange, Dissemination, Impact

Band	Mark	Description
A	4	An entirely persuasive case has been made for the potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/or impact with realistic plans for delivery.
B	3	There is a good case for potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/or impact together with a delivery plan.
C	2	There will be indications of awareness of the potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/ or impact activity but the proposal may lack realistic plans for implementation.
D	1	No indications of awareness of the project's potential for knowledge exchange, public engagement and/ or impact activity.

3. Supervisory Expertise, Research Environment, Partnership Engagement and Benefits

Band	Mark	Description
A	6 5	Supervision arrangements represent an excellent fit for the proposed research project. The supervisory team, in its totality, will provide the doctoral candidate with the best possible support available, i.e., world leading. The supervisory team is likely to offer complementary areas of expertise, at the level of knowledge/discipline, methodologies, and other appropriate skills (e.g., impact and KE experience), demonstrating the ability to develop the doctoral researchers' skills and professional competence. All members of the academic supervisory team are active researchers, demonstrating significant and ongoing expertise in the required field(s), as appropriate to their career stage. The research environment to be offered to the doctoral researcher is demonstrably excellent in all of its components and there is clear capacity to manage and successfully deliver the proposed project. Resources available across the HEI(s) and partner organisation(s) are essential to the successful completion of the PhD, e.g., collections, spaces or equipment, and the nominated applicant will be able to access the resources. There is demonstrably excellent 'added value' for the student being co-supervised by this particular partnership in terms of enhanced employability skills, and the involvement of the partner organisation(s) is essential to the successful delivery of the project. The research fits well with the expertise and/or priorities of the supervising HEI(s) and partner organisation(s). The benefits to the partner organisation are extremely convincing.
B	4	Supervision arrangements represent a strong fit with the proposed research. There is a strong research environment, with

		the full supervisory team and partnership able to offer good support, and the environment across the HEI(s) and partner organisation(s) providing access to necessary resources. There is evidence of existing or emerging capacity in the proposed research area and there is likely to be considerable benefit/ 'added value' to the student from the partnership arrangement. The involvement of the partner organisation(s) is useful but not essential. The benefits to the partner organisation are strong.
C	3	Supervision arrangements are adequate, with supervisors having some experience in the subject area but there are some questions about the fit between the full supervisory team and proposed research. There is adequate fit between the resource needs of the project and the research environment, including the partnership organisation(s). The 'added value' to the students is minimal and benefits to the partner organisation are adequate.
D	2 1	There are some strengths but there are also clear weaknesses in terms of supervisory fit and research environment. There are concerns around the capacity of the team and the environment to support the proposed project. The supervisory team does not fulfil the supervisory training requirements in all of its components. The partnership and collaboration offer no clear benefits to the student or to the partner organisation.

4. Project Management and Partnership Agreement

A	6 5	A robust and comprehensive management and contingency plan is in place, with different roles and expectations clearly identified. Excellent support for members of the supervisory team is in place where required. The process for implementing a Partnership Agreement is clear and the summary content of the Partnership Plan is detailed and seems robust and appropriate.
B	4	A clear management and contingency plan is in place, though some detail could be stronger. Different roles and expectations are clearly identified. Good support for members of the supervisory team is in place where required. The process for implementing a Partnership Agreement is clear and the summary content of the Partnership Plan is detailed and seems robust and appropriate.
C	3	An adequate management and contingency plan is in place, though some details are lacking. Different roles and expectations are minimally identified. There is some support for members of the supervisory team is in place where required.

		The process for implementing a Partnership Agreement is adequate.
D	2 1	The proposed management and/or contingency plans raise concerns about the management and delivery of the project. Support for supervisors, where required, is lacking. The process for implementing a Partnership Agreement is adequate.

5. Studentship Recruitment

A clear recruitment process is in place, or a student is attached.	Yes		Fundable
There is no clear recruitment process in place.	No		Unfundable

Appendix 4: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a PhD?

A PhD is the highest academic award offered by universities. In order to undertake a PhD, a student must normally complete an undergraduate degree and a master's degree. The duration of a SGSAH PhD is normally 3.5 years full-time or 7 years part-time, at the end of which, a thesis containing new knowledge will be produced. Candidates awarded a PhD may use the title 'Doctor'. PhD students are also referred to as doctoral researchers.

What are ARCS?

Applied Research Collaborative Studentships provide funding for PhD-level research projects which are developed in partnership between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and non-HEI organisations or businesses, where the research is applied to an

organisation's needs. The student's fees are paid, and they receive a stipend as well as additional funding to support training needs.

What will participating in an ARCS mean in practice for my organisation?
Partner organisations are expected to nominate a member of staff to work with the student over the course of the 3.5 year PhD research project (or 7 years part-time). This should include the student working on the project within the organisation for at least six months and up to 18 months. Exact duration and pattern of attendance (full-time/part-time/flexible) within the host organisation will be dependent on the individual project and agreed by all parties at the outset.

Students should be provided with appropriate desk/workspace and resources in line with standard staff arrangements. Students are fully funded to undertake their PhD, including the time spent within the partner organisation. This period should be integral to the completion of the project and is not an optional extra or internship.

How are the ARCS funded?
Funding decisions will be made by panels coordinated by SGSAH. ARCS are co-funded by the Scottish Funding Council (50%) and collaborating HEIs (25% each).

Do partner organisations provide any funding towards the ARCS?
Partner organisations are expected to contribute £500 in each year of the project (i.e., £1,750 in total) towards studentship costs. In exceptional circumstances, SGSAH may consider applications from organisations unable to meet this cost. Please contact us at enquiries@sgsah.ac.uk

How many ARCS will be awarded each year?
Up to three ARCS will be funded each year.

Who is involved in an ARCS?
The partner should assign a member of staff to act as the organisational supervisor for the project. The HEIs should assign one academic supervisor each to the project. The student will undertake the project with support of all supervisors. SGSAH will oversee the ARCS at national level and annual meetings for all parties. SGSAH will provide training for academic and partner organisations supervisors.

What are the benefits of ARCS for partner organisations?
- Added value
- Enhanced creative development and output
- Improved quality
- Increased capacity
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Increased profile
- Increased turnover/sales/visitor numbers

- New audiences or customer bases
- New ideas and innovation
- New knowledge and skills
- New networks/contacts
- New products, processes or services
- Potential to attract additional funding
- Press/media coverage
- Prototype development
- Skills development for employees
- Skills sharing and improved employer relations

What are the time commitments for partner organisations participating in ARCS?
Partners commit to being fully engaged in the project as an active participant for the entire duration of the PhD (3.5 years full-time or 6/7 years part-time). Partners must have the capacity to host and support the PhD student within their organisation for a period of 6-18 months, depending on the requirements of the project. Partners should be involved in at least three formal meetings with the PhD student and academic supervisors each year, and attend annual SGSAH events, which will bring participating students, partners and academics together as a cohort.

Who can be a partner organisation for an ARCS?
Organisations across the public, private and third sectors based anywhere in Scotland are eligible to apply as part of an ARCS.

What are the outputs of an ARCS project?
The student will produce a PhD thesis or practice-based equivalent containing new knowledge and undertake tasks agreed by the partner organisation in order to deliver a specific project related to the partner's area of work.

What do ARCS mean in practice for participating HEIs?
The main differences between an ARCS and a standard PhD is that ARCS will include a non-HEI partner in a co-supervisory role, and students will be expected to spend 6-18 months working within the host organisation as part of their research.

As part of the application process, HEIs should agree ongoing communication arrangements, which embed the partners in the supervisory process. This should include regular meetings (at least three per year) between all parties to the ARCS.

The period of work within the host organisation forms part of the core work towards the PhD. In administrative terms, this means that tuition fees will be payable to the HEI during this time, and students will be entitled to access ongoing supervision and support from academic staff.

Do HEIs provide any funding towards the ARCS?

HEIs each contribute 25% of the cost of an ARCS, as part of the SGSAH Memorandum of Agreement. They are not expected to contribute to any additional funding towards ARCS.