



AHRC 'Crafting Care for People, Place and Planet'

Doctoral Focal College

Student Handbook 2026/27

The AHRC 'Crafting Care for People, Place and Planet' Doctoral Focal College is an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded postgraduate research and training consortium. The college brings together the [University of Lancashire](#), [University of Liverpool](#), and the [Royal Northern College of Music](#).

This document is for 'Crafting Care' students and their supervisors, to outline the key conditions and opportunities associated with the studentships. The college is governed by the regulations of the [UKRI Terms and Conditions for Training Funding](#).

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Section 1: Key conditions of an AHRC ‘Crafting Care’ Studentship

Financial details

A full ‘Crafting Care’ studentship comprises:

- A maintenance stipend, at the UKRI recommended rate (£21,805 in 2026/27)
- Payment of tuition fees at the ‘Home’ rate

All constituent institutions have committed to waiving additional fees for international students who are funded by the college. Tuition fees will be charged at a ‘Home’ rate, which is then funded by the studentship. International Students will not need to pay additional Tuition Fees themselves.

The AHRC funding includes an amount per student per annum for a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) and Fieldwork costs. At the instruction of the AHRC, **students do not automatically receive this as a personal allowance** – the funds are pooled across the college, and students can apply for support using the processes outlined below.

Disabled Student’s Allowance (DSA)

Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) are intended to help with additional expenditure for the costs of study-related requirements that may be incurred because of disability, mental health problems or specific learning difficulties that mean additional support is needed to undertake a PhD. The allowances can cover the cost of non-medical personal assistance, items of specialist equipment, extra travel costs and general expenses.

The Research Councils have adopted a harmonised approach to DSA. Additional guidance is available on the UKRI website (<https://www.ukri.org/publications/disabled-students-allowance-dsa-claims/>)

Universities will undertake the assessment of need and provide costs for the student when they are required. The university will then claim back eligible costs at the end of the academic year from the AHRC by submitting a completed DSA claim form to the individual research councils by 31 October.

If you think you might be entitled to additional funding and support as a result of a disability, please be aware that this is handled through your university and that you do

not have to wait until you are registered to start the process of requesting support. Please reach out to the relevant team to discuss further:

- University of Lancashire: inclusivesupport@uclan.ac.uk
- University of Liverpool: disteam@liv.ac.uk
- Royal Northern College of Music: Jane Gray (jane.gray@rncm.ac.uk)

Supervision

‘Crafting Care’ students identify an appropriate primary supervisor at the point of submitting their full proposal. Applicants should have been in touch with the supervisor prior to submitting the funding application, to discuss their project and the supervisory fit. The fit of the supervisory team is assessed as part of the application process, and as such it is crucial that any potential changes to supervision during the studentship are highlighted to the college.

Any requested changes in supervision will need to be approved by the student's Head of Department, School or Faculty, who has the right to turn down a supervisor if they are not deemed suitable/appropriate or have insufficient experience. Similarly, the college may intervene if suitable alternative supervisory arrangements are not made.

Ethics

As an important source of public funding for postgraduate training, the AHRC has an obligation towards the public and academic community to try to ensure that such training is conducted in a professional manner and will not give rise to distress or annoyance to individuals. ‘Crafting Care’ students are expected to follow their institution’s ethics approval process, and UKRI has its own policies on Research Integrity (<https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/good-research-resource-hub/research-integrity/>) which should also be consulted. It is expected that proper consideration has been given to any ethical issues that the research project may raise.

Transfers

It is possible, under certain circumstances, for a student’s studentship to transfer to another institution, for example if their primary supervisor moves institution.

This will only be approved if the transfer is to another institution and PhD programme that is already eligible for AHRC funding through a Doctoral Training Partnership, Landscape Award, or Focal Award.

Part-time and Full-time Study Arrangements

‘Crafting Care’ students can undertake their programmes on a part-time or full-time basis. Stipend payments will be pro rata for part-time students.

It is possible for a student to apply to transfer between part-time and full-time studentship award, or vice versa. Students need to apply via the transfer of registration process at their home institution. The college recommends that, where possible, changes of mode of study should take effect from the beginning of a quarter (i.e. 1st October, 1st January, 1st April, or 1st July).

- Holders of Collaborative Doctoral Awards, where the supervisory team includes a non-HEI Partner, will require the agreement of the collaborating partner before any request can be considered.
- A transfer will not normally be allowed for acute health problems where suspension of the award is the appropriate course of action. However, where a health problem might prevent a student from permanently studying on a full-time basis, a case for a transfer to part time can be considered.
- A transfer from part-time to full-time cannot involve employment that would prevent the student from working on the PhD on a full-time basis.
- A transfer from full-time to part-time will be considered where a change in domestic circumstances means that a dependant requires more of the award holder’s time, or where the award holder has taken up part-time employment.

Change to Project Details

Minor changes to thesis titles and research outlines do not need to be referred or approved by the college. Significant changes to the title and/or focus of research need to be approved in advance by the college. Such approval will not be given unless a clear justification is provided.

Living arrangements during the studentship

It is expected that all 'Crafting Care' students will reside within a reasonable travel time of the university at which they are registered, and we would expect there to be regular in-person contact between the student and supervisor. Should a student need to live further away (only within the UK) for a period, the college will not be able to provide any additional financial support to facilitate this i.e. the costs of travelling to campus for compulsory activity or more expensive travel resulting from living further away.

Employment during the studentship

'Crafting Care' studentship award holders are permitted to undertake a certain amount of paid teaching or other research work during their studentship, provided they spend a minimum of 1,650 hours (if full-time) each academic year on their doctoral research and research training. This equates to 37.5 hours a week over 44 weeks (see 'Annual Leave' above). Their programme of postgraduate training must be compatible with such employment, and their primary supervisor must approve this.

Where students undertake demonstration or teaching, or other types of employment at their home institution, they should be paid for this in addition to any stipend they receive from the 'Crafting Care' college. It should not be treated as a compulsory element of the award or of any research training.

Students may undertake a small amount of other paid work either in term time or during holidays, but this is not encouraged, especially during the times when students are expected to be fully engaged in research training and thesis preparation.

Full-time studentship award holders cannot hold either a full-time job, or a permanent part-time job, during the period of their award. Part-time studentship award holders cannot hold a full-time job.

Full-time studentship award holders cannot change to part-time for reasons of employment during the final six months of their studentship.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The 'Crafting Care' Doctoral Focal College is an interdisciplinary and diverse initiative with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion integrated into all key areas of activity.

Building on the exemplary work of our partners, both HEI and non-HEI, the college strives to actively break down barriers related to race, gender, age, socio-economic, and health-related status (e.g. ableism and neuro-normativity).

We prioritise expertise-by-experience, whether that is living with illness, encountering exclusion, or working as an established professional or practitioner. Our partners are united in their commitment to forging non-traditional pathways to PhD study, vitally enriching a research culture with care at its centre.

Our EDI priorities are to:

1. *Increase access to doctoral studies* for underrepresented groups and communities.
2. Ensure *recruitment* across a broad spectrum of prospective PGRs irrespective of age, gender, race, socio-economic status, and disability.
3. Promote positive and EDI-friendly *working practices*, including pluralistic and bespoke employability support for our PGRs in collaboration with non-HEI partners.
4. Encourage diverse and supportive *supervision and supervisory teams*, that are equipped to prioritise PGRs' *mental health and wellbeing*.

Section 2: Suspensions and Funded Extensions

Studentships are intended to be held on a continuous basis, but it is understood that sometimes a student may need to interrupt their studies.

Please note that suspensions or extensions can only be considered during the funded period of the studentship. If a student interrupts their registration after their AHRC funding has finished, a suspension cannot be considered.

Unfunded suspensions – where the studentship funding is paused for the length of the suspension and restarts at re-registration – can be requested via the student's university. The period of suspension cannot exceed one calendar year in any one instance, and the total periods of suspension should not exceed one calendar year during the lifetime of the award. The student's supervisor must approve the suspension, as well as the non-HEI partner supervisor in Collaborative Doctoral Awards. The student's supervisor must confirm that the suspension of studies will not delay the submission of the final thesis by more than the length of the suspension. Retrospective requests cannot be considered.

There are a number of UKRI policies to support students with funded extensions – where the studentship funding continues throughout the period of suspension and the funding end date is also extended – which are outlined below.

Family Leave

AHRC funded students are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity leave. The first 26 weeks are paid at full stipend rate. The following 13 weeks are paid at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks would be unpaid.

To be eligible for maternity leave, the period of leave must commence before the end of studentship funding. Maternity leave can begin up to 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.

Partners are entitled to up to 10 days paid Partner's or Paternity Leave on full stipend. There is no qualifying period for parental leave. This can be taken at any time within the first year since birth. AHRC funded students are not eligible for the government's shared parental leave scheme.

International students should ensure they are aware of the regulations of their visa with regards to parental leave, as this may change or limit the support they are able to access. Institutional visa teams will be best placed to advise students in need of further guidance.

Adoption Leave

A student is eligible for Adoption Leave if the student has been newly matched with a child through an adoption agency, or if the student has used a surrogate during their studentship. Leave during the studentship for a main adopter of a child begins when the child's placement starts, or an agreed period of time before the child's placement starts to support preparation. The support available for the main adopter is commensurate to Maternity Leave. The support available for a student who is the partner is commensurate to Partner's or Paternity Leave.

Neonatal Care Leave

A student is eligible for Neonatal Care Leave if: (1) the birth of the child is within the funded period of the studentship or a planned period of Maternity Leave and the child is receiving neonatal care in a hospital and (2) they are either the mother of the child or the father/ partner of the mother. One week of Neonatal Care Leave should be provided for each week or part-week in which the child is in neonatal care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. This is additional to any Maternity Leave or Partner's or Paternity Leave.

Medical Leave

Medical Leave should be used for any circumstances by which a student is deemed unfit to study. It may also be used to provide paid leave to attend medical appointments where flexible study is not possible.

Examples of leave that can be supported under Medical Leave are:

- Sick leave (including both physical and mental health)
- Pregnancy-related illness
- Antenatal appointments

- Fertility treatment – a student experiencing fertility issues and has been medically advised that they require leave, including (but not limited to) undergoing fertility treatment.
- Disability-related illness (including chronic illness)
- Disability-related appointments (including for chronic illness) e.g. diagnosis, therapy or treatment.
- Gender reassignment – a student undertaking gender reassignment and has been medically advised that they require leave.

‘Crafting Care’ students can take up to 28 weeks medical leave within any 12 months period, and their studentship will be extended accordingly. Beyond 28 weeks, studentships should be suspended. Total suspensions on account of illness cannot normally exceed 12 months during the course of the studentship. Medical Leave cannot typically be applied retrospectively.

International students should ensure they are aware of the regulations of their visa with regards to medical leave, as this may change or limit the support they are able to access. Institutional visa teams will be best placed to advise students in need of further guidance.

Additional Leave

Additional leave may be provided to cover specific instances where a student may be required to be absent from study that are not covered by other types of leave. These include:

- Special leave (including bereavement and pregnancy loss)
- Baby loss (including stillbirth and neonatal death)
- Carer’s leave
- Additional disability leave associated with delayed adjustments
- Health and safety
- Public duties

Further details on the requirements and entitlements associated with these reasons for leave requests can be found in the UKRI Terms and Conditions for Training Funding

(<https://www.ukri.org/publications/terms-and-conditions-for-training-funding/>) or get in touch with the college at craftingcare@liverpool.ac.uk to discuss your personal circumstances. Supervisors are welcome to get in touch on behalf of students who are unable to reach out.

Annual Leave

Full-time students are allowed up to eight weeks' holiday (including public holidays) each academic year as approved by their supervisor. If a studentship covers a period of less than 12 months in any academic year, a student's holiday entitlement will be reduced on a pro-rata basis. Students do not need to formally record annual / holiday leave with the college.

International students should ensure they are aware of the regulations of their visa with regards to holiday leave and travel outside the UK. Institutional visa teams will be best placed to advise students in need of further guidance.

Section 3: Completing the PhD

Thesis Submission

‘Crafting Care’ students are expected to submit their thesis by the end of their funded period and are strongly discouraged from taking any unpaid writing up period, even where their university permits this. To facilitate this, studentships are longer as standard and there are a range of support mechanisms in place (including medical, family, and compassionate leave) which may extend the studentship.

Students cannot access Research Training Support Grant expenses after the end of the studentship. Students will have to pay for any fees, including Submission Pending fees, incurred after the studentship ends. If a student submits their thesis before the end of the studentship, the date of submission will become the studentship end date, and no further payments will be made. Any overpaid maintenance will be reclaimed.

First destination data

The AHRC may request that the college provides data on the first employment destinations of all AHRC-funded students. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects destination data on behalf of all the research councils and universities must ensure that they complete the research council funding fields accurately. The college may also be required to provide some first destination data for their students as part of the annual report.

Publication of results

Decisions on whether the results of a student's work are published are at the discretion of the student and supervisor. Students are advised to refer to the UKRI guidance on publishing research findings: <https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/publishing-your-research-findings/making-your-research-data-open/>

Published work should formally acknowledge the support of the AHRC and quote the relevant ‘Crafting Care’ Grant Number: UKRI2803

Data Protection Rights and Responsibilities

If students wish to discuss any issues or queries related to their data protection rights, they should, in the first instance, get in touch with their institutional contact:

- University of Lancashire: DPFOIA@lancashire.ac.uk
- University of Liverpool: legal@liverpool.ac.uk
- Royal Northern College of Music: dpo@rncm.ac.uk

Section 4: Additional Funding, Training and Development Opportunities

Research Training Support Grant

All 'Crafting Care' students have access to a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG), which can be used for a number of research related purposes including conference attendance, fieldwork, training courses, and the purchase of key resources.

The process for claiming RTSG expenses can be found on the 'Crafting Care' Website here: <https://ahrc-crafting-care.ac.uk/current-students/rtsg/> Please read this documentation carefully prior to submitting a claim. The majority of RTSG expenses will work by reimbursement, where the student makes the initial purchase or booking, then reclaims the costs. There is a monthly deadline – the last working day of the month - to submit a claim, and payments may take up to four weeks to be received.

Placements

All 'Crafting Care' students have the opportunity to undertake a placement with a non-HEI Partner during the course of their PhD. Their studentship will be extended to facilitate the placement, and some limited funding is available to cover the costs of travel and accommodation associated with undertaking a placement. The 'Crafting Care' Placement Scheme will launch in Summer 2027.

Development Needs Analysis

All 'Crafting Care' students are expected to undertake an annual Development Needs Analysis (DNA) process during both their PhD. Reminders will be sent when it is time to complete the DNA form. The completion of this form is a requirement of AHRC funding.

The purpose of the DNA is twofold:

- 1) It is a mechanism by which individual students can assess and monitor their training needs, and identify training opportunities, in liaison with their supervisors.
- 2) The results of the DNA process will be reviewed by 'Crafting Care' Training, Employability and Knowledge Exchange (TEKE) Panel to identify recurring training needs across the cohort, and thus tailor and expand college training opportunities to respond to students' needs.

The 'Crafting Care' Training Programme

The 'Crafting Care' Training Programme consists of six components:

1. General Skills
2. Discipline-specific Skills
3. Research Methods
4. Medical and Environmental Studies
5. The Interdisciplinary Lab
6. Placements

More details of the opportunities and expectations associated with the training programme can be found on our website: <https://ahrc-crafting-care.ac.uk/current-students/training-programme/>. Students will be guided to identify their training needs by completing the Development Needs Analysis process – discussed above – with their supervisory team.

Section 5: Key Contacts

The ‘Crafting Care’ Leadership Team

The University of Liverpool leads the ‘Crafting Care’ Doctoral Focal College, and the Director and Manager of the college are both based at Liverpool:

- Director: Professor Josie Billington
- Manager: Hayley Meloy

The best way to contact the Director or Manager is to email craftingcare@liverpool.ac.uk

Institutional Contacts

Each university within the ‘Crafting Care’ Doctoral Focal College has an academic Institutional Lead and a key administrative contact who can support you with local queries about institutional-specific matters (e.g. annual progression or university policies), or about maintenance stipend or fees payments, as these are handled locally.

University of Lancashire

- Institutional Lead: Dr Kathryn Jarvis
- Key Administrative Contact: Clare Altham

University of Liverpool

- Institutional Lead: Dr Matthew Bradley
- Key Administrative Contact: Julie McColl

Royal Northern College of Music

- Institutional Lead: Dr Tom Parkinson
- Key Administrative Contact: Charlotte Wheatcroft