



AHRC COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL PARTNERSHIP AWARDS AT THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON (2017)

Frequently Asked Questions for Academic Staff and Research Support Staff at Higher Education Institutions

Please refer to this guidance before submitting a studentship application to the V&A

The Arts and Humanities Research Council's Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) scheme is intended to encourage and develop collaboration between UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and non-HEI organisations.

A CDA is a paid studentship that enables an HEI and non-HEI organisation to collaborate on a project that will provide benefits to both. The project is carried out by a research student recruited and jointly supervised by the partners, and who will gain a doctoral qualification by the end of the award.

The AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) route is designed for non-HEI organisations with a strong track record in supporting and delivering PhD studentships. Under this route, specific organisations are allocated a cohort of AHRC-funded studentships, for which they can nominate individual doctoral projects and HEI partners.

The AHRC has awarded the V&A an allocation of five funded studentships that will start in October 2018. This open competition is designed to identify and select which funded studentship projects the Museum chooses to support, in accordance with AHRC guidelines.

Studentship proposals must be submitted by the HEI employee who would act as the student's main supervisor, and have been co-developed with a V&A employee who would act as the student's co-supervisor.

Proposals chosen for funding will be of high quality, appropriate for collaborative study at doctoral level, relevant to the V&A and in line with the strategic interests and objectives of both the Museum and wider cultural heritage sector.

What is a CDA/CDP Studentship?

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards are intended to encourage and develop collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and non-academic organisations and businesses. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/funding/opportunities/current/collaboratedoctoralawards/>

V&A CDA/CDP studentships are paid studentships that allows the V&A and an HEI to collaborate on a project that falls within the AHRC's subject domain, and that can provide demonstrated benefits to both partners. Each project is carried out by a research student (or students) that are recruited by the partners, jointly supervised by members from both the V&A and HEI, and who will gain a doctoral qualification by the end of the award. The studentship's subject matter should be developed in close collaboration with the proposed V&A co-supervisor(s). The HEI will administer the studentship, receiving funds from the AHRC for fees and to cover the student's maintenance.

Each AHRC studentship includes the HEI tuition fees and a student maintenance grant for 3 years (please note that the cost of Oxbridge College fees are not covered). The AHRC will furthermore fund a sum equivalent to a further 0.5 year term (the "Student Development Fund"). This fund enables the student to undertake further training and skills development opportunities as part of the PhD programme, subject to the mutual agreement of the student and their supervisors.

Please note that a studentship can only be taken up by UK/EU citizens and residents. For non-UK EU citizens the award only pays tuition fees, not the student maintenance grant.

1. What is the role of the HEI and V&A?

The HEI partner for a CDP studentship can be anywhere in the UK. They are responsible for administering the studentship in line with the AHRC's terms and conditions. Once the AHRC has checked and approved the nominated PhD studentship projects, these will be set up as Doctoral Training Grants to the HEI involved in each project, and will follow the same process for activating grants and funding students as for successful applications made under

the CDA Open call (i.e. the funding award will be made directly to the collaborating HEI rather than to the V&A).

The **HEI supervisor** is formally the lead supervisor for the studentship. They and their department should demonstrably provide the right expertise and support for the topic. All CDP applications should have both a main HEI supervisor and a second HEI supervisor, who would ensure continuity of supervision in the event of staff changes during the PhD period.

The **V&A supervisor** is formally the co-supervisor for the studentship. The CDP co-supervisor must be a member of V&A staff, and to that end all project proposals should be a joint effort between the proposed HEI supervisor and the proposed V&A co-supervisor. All CDP applications should have both a main V&A co-supervisor and a second V&A co-supervisor, who would ensure continuity of supervision in the event of staff changes during the PhD period.

The student is expected to spend a significant period of time researching with the V&A, and attend training and other activities the Museum organises for them. Depending on the student and their project, we may also encourage them to spend some time as a volunteer with another department to gain additional work experience. The V&A will also provide additional financial support to the student towards their travel and related research costs (working out at up to £1,000 per student over the course of their studentship).

2. Can I propose more than one CDA working on a topic?

Applicants may propose two or more studentships working on a larger project (which could involve different HEI and V&A departments or sets of supervisors), however please note that the V&A has been awarded five studentships per year and competition for these is likely to be strong.

3. Can a proposal be for a particular student?

Yes. It is possible to name a particular student who would be offered the studentship if the application is successful. As there would be considerable competition if the studentships were openly advertised, the proposal will need to not only show that the named person is capable of carrying out PhD level research, but that they are a strong candidate for the particular project in mind. Please consult the further guidance for potential named students at the end of this document.

4. What kind of project is the V&A looking for?

We welcome CDP applications *on any topic provided that* the proposed project is of high quality, is appropriate for collaborative study at doctoral level, and is relevant to both AHRC subject areas (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/funding/research/subjectcoverage/>) and V&A's priorities.

Our key assessment criteria will be:

- The proposed project's academic quality;
- The extent to which the proposed project supports the V&A's own research priorities (see pp. 3-4 of the V&A's current Research Handbook (<http://www.vam.ac.uk/info/research/>) for details); and
- The extent to which the proposed project engages with the needs and priorities of the wider cultural sector.

The V&A's research interests and priorities are detailed in the 'V&A Research Strategy', which is available on the CDP page on the V&A website (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/collaborative-doctoral-partnerships>).

We also see considerable benefits in encouraging connections between students working on similar subjects at different CDP-holding institutions. The following overarching themes cover areas known to be of interest to many CDP-holding institutions. Whilst it is not obligatory for your proposed project to be explicitly connected with any of the themes below, we encourage you to consider potential connections:

- Photography as Art, Photography as Practice
What can the collections of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage organisations tell us about the uses of photography?
- Collecting, Connections and Creating: 1600-1800
Many institutions hold significant collections from the early modern period. What can we learn from considering these different collections together? How have collections led to the reorganisation and creation of new knowledge?

- Materiality in a Digital Age
What opportunities arise for museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage organisations from digital technologies and social media?
- Linking the Arts, Sciences and Technology
What is the role of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage organisations in investigating and representing the relations between the arts and the sciences? What is the role of science in art galleries, and the arts in science and technology museums?
- Museums, Galleries and Public Culture
What has been the influence of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage organisations on the public culture, and how may they most effectively wield this influence? Reciprocally, how has the public culture affected the policies and practices of such organisations?
- End of Empire
How has the end of global empires affected the collections of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage organisations, and how can imperial-era collections be sympathetically and effectively deployed in our multicultural age?

5. How do I propose a project?

In the first instance, HEI colleagues are invited to submit an initial Expression of Interest.

Please send the following information to ahrcresearch@vam.ac.uk by **Friday 8 September 2017**:

1. Indicative project title
2. A brief statement of no more than 300 words including the following information:
 - Summary of proposal
 - Gap in knowledge addressed by the proposal
 - Relevant scholarly literature

- Method(s)
- Key research questions
- Relevance of project to the V&A
- Specific V&A Collections interrogated by the project

Please also indicate whether you have identified an actual or prospective V&A Department and/or named co-supervisor. It is not necessary to have done so at this stage. We are very happy to work with applicants to identify V&A supervisors.

Projects must show a clear link to the V&A's Collections and research priorities. The latter are detailed in the current version of the 'V&A Research Strategy'.

Queries should be addressed to Tao Chang at t.chang@vam.ac.uk or 0207 942 2577 in the first instance.

Expressions of Interest will be assessed by an internal panel at the V&A. Those that meet the academic requirements of the PhD and the V&A's research priorities will be supported in developing full-length proposals. Applicants will be informed of the internal panel's decision by mid-September 2017.

Key stages in the CDP proposals process in 2017/18:

w/c 3 July	Call for HEI Expressions of Interest (Eol) issued
8 September	Deadline for HEI Eols
Aug/Sept	Matchmaking of V&A and HEI supervisors
Oct	Full drafts can be submitted for feedback by internal panel
Late Oct	Internal panel feedback returned to V&A and HEI colleagues
24 Nov	Final deadline for submission of CDP proposals
Jan 2018	Panel meets to select 5 CDP proposals for 2018/19 recruitment

A completed project proposal form on behalf of both the proposed HEI supervisor and V&A co-supervisor must be sent to ahrcresearch@vam.ac.uk by **24th November 2017**.

6. What happens next?

An assessment panel, consisting of V&A staff, HEI and other heritage organisation representatives, will meet in early 2018 to consider all eligible applications. Panel members

will not take part in the review of any proposals where a conflict of interest could be construed. Some proposals may be recommended subject to suggested improvements or conditions by the panel. Feedback on proposals will be provided.

If your proposal is successful, the V&A will formally nominate the project to the AHRC. The HEI supervisor will then need to submit a CDP “application” form via JeS to allow the AHRC to undertake basic eligibility checks and to set up awards. Once this is completed the studentship can be advertised, and the HEI will then administer it in line with standard AHRC CDA studentships.

7. How will applications be assessed?

The Panel will assess, mark and rank each eligible application using the following primary criteria:

1) The academic strength of the proposal

- Is there a PhD in this topic?
- Will the research lead to an original and substantial contribution to the knowledge of the subject matter?
- Are there clear and answerable research questions? How practical will it be for the student to complete the research and answer these questions in the time period and with the specialist support and resources the V&A and partner HEI have available?
- Is there scope for the student to develop their own emphasis with the overall proposal?
- What will be the benefits to the student of doing a doctorate in conjunction with the V&A rather than in an HEI alone?

2) How well the proposal supports the V&A’s key aims and priorities

- How does this CDA support the V&A’s research aims and priorities and current initiatives?
- Is this CDA part of an existing or planned Museum research project, exhibition or new gallery redevelopment? If so, how will it support or extend that project?
- Is the proposal part of a partnership with other museums, libraries or similar institutions?

3) How well the proposal engages with the needs and priorities of the wider cultural sector

- How does this CDA connect with challenges and opportunities relating to the wider cultural sector?
- Is the proposal part of a partnership with other museums, libraries or similar institutions?

Secondary considerations will include:

- The suitability and track record of the proposed supervisors
- The project's fit with the workload and other commitments of the proposed supervisors
- The suitability and track record of the named student (if applicable)

8. Further Guidance for Prospective HEI Supervisors

The most successful CDP proposals often develop from already established relationships between academics and museum-based staff, and/or ongoing dialogues between them concerning new research.

Museum-based research usually has a different focus and approach than PhD research taking place in universities.

- It often (although not always) relates directly to our collections (see <http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections>).
- Its methodology usually involves the in-depth material analysis of museum objects, which will form a central body of evidence - along with other types of documentation - for the CDP student.
- Some of the research questions are raised by the objects and gaps in our knowledge about them.
- The focus for all CDP studentships is the production of the thesis (or equivalent), and additional outcomes may also be appropriate. The results of the CDP research should directly contribute to our interpretation of the V&A's collections and the information we present to our audiences.
- Both supervisors will need to consider the type of student who would be suited to the project. Past experience indicates that while many MA students have the academic skills necessary, far fewer have the 'object reading and analysis' skills that working with collections requires.

A successful CDP proposal needs to meet these requirements *as well as* relate to relevant academic research interests.

If you are not familiar with the V&A's collections and programmes, we encourage you to look at recent publications (see <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/r/research-reports/>) and exhibitions (see <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/e/exhibitions/>) relevant to your subject.

Please find the curators, conservators and other museum professionals working with collections or on topics relevant to your field and contact them well in advance of the CDP proposal deadline. If you do not personally know the relevant individual, informal preliminary contact can establish areas of mutual interest and relevant research. Details of V&A staff research outputs can be found in our Research Reports, and many department webpages (see <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/d/departments/>) will also indicate the members of staff responsible for particular parts of the collection.

To allow sufficient time to co-develop a proposal with a prospective V&A co-supervisor, we ask the HEI supervisor to have submitted an Expression of Interest by 18 August 2017.

9. Further Guidance for Proposals with Nominated Students

The AHRC recommends that in order to allow equal of opportunity, and to ensure that the best applicants are attracted, the selection of CDP students should be made through open competition. We will advertise these V&A studentship opportunities in spring 2018.

It is recognised, however, that some projects will have originated with a particular student and where that student has the appropriate ability, and meets the eligibility criteria, it would be unfair and inappropriate for the project to be advertised. There may also be instances where a very particular knowledge or skill-set is required which means a project is developed with a student in mind. In such cases, nomination of a student without competition can be justified.

Each application with a nominated student will be rigorously judged on its own merits. In addition to the usual CDP criteria, our Assessment Panel's decision will take into account the information and evidence provided about your ability, aptitude, commitment and preparedness for postgraduate study, and the quality of work you will produce.

If you are thinking of developing a PhD proposal as a nominated student, please consider:

The nature of a Collaborative PhD and if it is right for you

Collaborative PhD students will work across two locations and with two sets of supervisors. This enables students to gain valuable first-hand experience in different environment and enhances their employment-related skills and training. However, you should also be prepared to overcome potential challenges specifically related to the nature of collaborative PhDs. This includes working effectively with supervisors who – depending on the institutions involved – may also be geographically distant.

A collaborative PhD with the V&A also usually involves in-depth research on some aspect of our collections. In such cases, students are expected to read and analyse objects as they would other forms of historical evidence, such as documents and visual images. If you are approaching a V&A curator as a prospective co-supervisor, you should therefore define the specific collections you wish to study and how you will incorporate the perspective of material culture with the academic research you intend to do.

Whether you are eligible for the scheme

Nominated students must meet the same eligibility criteria as any AHRC doctoral research student. Full details are in the ‘Training Grant Funding Guide’ available on the AHRC’s website at: www.ahrc.ac.uk, and which should be read alongside the ‘Terms and Conditions of RCUK Training Grants’ and the ‘RCUK Training Grant Guide’, both available at the RCUK website (see <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/grantstcs/>).

How you will locate and secure the agreement of the right supervisors

To be named on a CDP application, you must secure both the active support of the proposed HEI supervisor and the proposed V&A co-supervisor. You must have met and discussed the project with them, and gained their agreement to co-supervise the project. Be well prepared for these discussions – your proposed supervisors will want to see clear evidence of your progress so far and your PhD plans.

As early as possible, you should contact the university department you are interested in to check that they have an appropriately qualified supervisor in the area you wish to study. If a HEI supervisor agrees to develop a CDP application with you as a nominated student, you should together approach your intended V&A co-supervisor for further discussion.

***Please note that the V&A will only accept a CDP application that names a nominated student if it has the formal endorsement of both the proposed HEI and V&A supervisors. To**

allow sufficient time to co-develop a proposal with a prospective V&A co-supervisor, we ask the HEI supervisor to have submitted an Expression of Interest by 18 August 2017.*