

HSS Principal's Doctoral Research Studentships competition for Academic Year 2024/25

This memo outlines the procedures for the HSS Principal's Doctoral Research Studentships competition (QMPS).

General considerations

Studentships are available on a +3 basis only. Awards are open to both home and overseas applicants, for both full-time and part-time study. The number of available awards will be confirmed at a later date. Under no circumstances can awarded Studentships be deferred.

BAME Studentships:

Up to two awards are ring-fenced for BAME candidates (UK/home fees only). Eligible candidates should indicate in their statement of purpose that they would like to be considered for the BAME awards. They will automatically also be considered for the non-ring-fenced awards.

***NEW for 24/25:** This year the Doctoral College (DC) will be offering up to 2 BAME studentships (UK/home fees only) to PGR applicants in HSS. The eligibility criteria for the Doctoral College BAME awards are the same as the HSS ones and candidates will be assessed in the same competition. Eligible candidates should indicate in their statement of purpose that they would like to be considered for the BAME awards, without further specification.

Widening Participation Studentship:

One award is endorsed by the Stuart Hall Foundation ([SHF](#)) (UK/home fees only). The SHF-QMUL HSS Principal's Studentship (SHF/HSS) is based on widening participation eligibility criteria (included in the SHF/HSS Principal Studentship's explanatory memo). Applicants must fine-tune their statement of purpose to include a description of why they think their project might be suitable for this Studentship, and of what Stuart Hall's 'legacy' might mean to them. They will automatically also be considered for the general awards and, where appropriate, for the BAME awards.

Irrespective of the scheme (BAME/SHF/General), candidates may apply for up to 3 years of FT or 6 years of PT funding. Studentships are open to applicants who have not yet begun their doctoral study, *and* to applicants who are currently in their first year of a FT programme or the first two years of a PT programme.¹ If a candidate has already begun

¹ Successful candidates who have already begun their PhD programme will receive 36 months of funding (spread over twice that period for PT students) *minus* the number of months completed between their initial enrolment and October 2023 (twice that number for PT students). If a candidate is currently following a PT programme, *and states their intention to change to FT study if their application is successful*, any award made will be for 36 months *minus* twice the number of months completed between their initial enrolment and October 2023.

their PhD, selection panels will be looking for a research proposal that is concomitantly stronger than the proposal of someone yet to begin their thesis.

Each School can make **up to 6 nominations** to the Faculty, **plus 4 nominations for BAME awards plus 1 nomination for the SHF/HSS Studentship**.² For the SHF/HSS Studentship Schools are also allowed to put forward the first highest ranked candidate in their reserve list that had applied to the SHF Studentship. This should be clearly indicated as “SHF Reserve candidate” (see n. 4 below).

Schools need to submit a **single ranked list of candidates** irrespective of the scheme (General/BAME/SHF) and regardless of how many disciplines and Departments a School may contain, with **no internal quotas** (e.g. between Law and CCLS, English and Drama, or the various disciplines within SLLF and Geography). Schools should complete a Studentship Nomination Form (SNF) for each nominated candidate.

Joint nominations are encouraged, with 0.5 FTE of an award for a candidate going to each School, provided that candidates would rank in the top six (and/or top four BAME and/or top one SHF) for each School. In such cases, Schools should liaise to complete a single SNF, but should each provide their own ranking for the candidate (see below for ranking process). Joint nominations are those nominations where both Schools would like to put forward the same candidate. Joint *supervision* (*ie* where the supervisory team belongs to two separate Schools, but only one School includes the candidate in its ranking) does not fall under the joint *nomination* rules.

Given the level of competition for these studentships, supervisors and Schools must bear in mind that only the strongest applications can be supported. In those cases where the Faculty panel deem the proposal to lack the minimum quality standards for doctoral studies, the relevant candidate(s) will not be considered for an award, either directly or via the reserve list. The choice of department and supervisors is an important aspect of the evaluation, and the Faculty panel give serious consideration to the fit between the supervisory team and the student’s proposed research project. Therefore, it is extremely important to work with candidates to develop their proposals, and to make a case for the supervisory team and fit with the unit of research as strong as possible. Equally important is the persuasiveness of the assessment made by the School panel.

Schools should draw up a ranking of their nominated students, based on the criteria outlined below. All ranked candidates will be considered by the Faculty panel. Rankings and other required materials should be sent to Faculty (June Ryde: j.ryde@qmul.ac.uk), by **Friday 26 February 2024 (12:00)**.

Timetable and paperwork

1. Candidates wishing to be considered for HSS studentships must apply to QMUL by **Wednesday 24 January 2024 (17:00)**. Candidates for the Department of Law/CCLS

² For the avoidance of doubt, BAME and SHF candidates may be included in a School’s 6 ‘regular’ FTE nominations *and* in its two nominations for ring-fenced studentships.

must apply by **Wednesday 6 December 2023 (17:00)**. In all cases, earlier application is strongly advised.

2. No additional documentation is required from candidates for the BAME awards. Their declaration that they wish to be considered for these awards is excluded from the character limit for their statement of purpose.
3. SHF/HSS candidates also need to indicate that they wish to be considered for the award, and no additional evidence is required at this stage to prove that they meet the eligibility criteria or the exceptional circumstances³. Their declaration that they wish to be considered for these awards is excluded from the character limit for their statement of purpose.
4. A ‘Guidance to Applicants’ document is included in this bundle of documents, to help candidates to complete their studentship applications. Schools should make this document available online at the earliest opportunity.
5. An “SHF-QMUL HSS Principal’s Studentship Explanatory memo” is also enclosed in this bundle. It covers eligibility and assessment criteria as well as other important information for candidates and Schools. Schools should make it available online at the earliest opportunity.
6. Supervisors should complete Part 1 of the Studentship Nomination Form well ahead of time to give their Director of Graduate Studies (or Chair of Selection panel if different) enough time to write their supporting statement. Please make sure this is appropriately communicated to supervisors.
7. Schools will then evaluate their candidates, on the basis of their online application form, research proposal, and statement of purpose (but *not* the references accompanying the online application). The following criteria *must* be used for evaluation: a) the quality of the research proposal; b) the preparedness of the applicant; c) the feasibility of the project. These criteria must be weighted as follows: **0.5, 0.25, 0.25**. The ‘Guidance to Applicants’ document will provide further clarification of what the criteria entail.
8. Schools are free to make their own arrangements for selection, with the following provisos:
 - *Interviews, virtual or otherwise, will not normally be held as part of the formal selection process, unless the use of interviews has been specifically agreed with the Deputy Dean for Research (PGR) in advance.*
 - In view of the typically high volume of applications, Schools should devise mechanisms to sift out weaker candidates quickly (e.g. a first round of ‘traffic light’ scoring based on the criteria outlined above), and establish a longlist that could then be reduced to the final list of nominations.
 - *NB candidates must not be equally ranked. In the event of candidates scoring equally, the candidate scoring more highly for the quality of the research proposal must be ranked more highly. If candidates cannot be separated on that criterion, the candidate*

³ Evidence of meeting the criteria under (2) of the SHF/HSS explanatory memo may be requested before confirming the award.

scoring more highly for preparedness must be ranked more highly. If candidates cannot be separated on that criterion, the candidate scoring more highly for the feasibility of the project must be ranked more highly.

- Careful consideration must be given to the composition of the nomination panel:
 - Panels must take account of EDI issues as appropriate, and ensure that good practice in this respect is followed throughout. This includes ensuring that all those involved in the process have undertaken unconscious bias and fair selection training since January 2021. With this in mind, Schools should identify panellists at the earliest opportunity, in case training is needed.
 - An appropriate balance of disciplinary specialisms must be ensured
 - To avoid conflicts of interest, *panel members must not be involved in discussing and ranking applications where they are named as prospective supervisors*
9. Nominations should be submitted to the Faculty, (June Ryde: j.ryde@qmul.ac.uk), by **Friday 26 February 2024 (12:00)**. Units should submit the following documentation for each candidate (joint *nominations* should be submitted by the prospective home unit only):

- Studentship Nomination Form, with Part 2 completed by the DGS (or Chair of selection panel, if different)
- Candidate's QMUL application form
- Candidate's statement of purpose
- Candidate's research proposal

The paperwork should be collated into a **single PDF file for each candidate**, with a filename on the following model:

ranking number + SURNAME forename + submitting unit [+ 'with other unit', if a joint nomination] [+ 'BAME', or SHF if applicable] + QMPS
 e.g. '2 BALIM Zeynep SPIR with Law QMPS'

Each School must also submit a **single ranked list of candidates**⁴, and a **statement** outlining the composition of its nomination panel and the evaluation process undertaken. This statement must include:

- Explanation of how the panel's composition and process have taken account of EDI issues
- Explanation of how the panel's composition has ensured an appropriate balance of disciplinary specialisms
- Confirmation that conflicts of interest have been avoided, and specifically that no panel members have been involved in discussing and ranking applications in which they are named as prospective supervisors
- Explanation of how the evaluation process was carried out, e.g. use of a longlist, numerical or 'traffic light' scoring, etc.

⁴ For the avoidance of doubt, the ranking of General, BAME, and SHF candidates should be intertwined. Only the SHF reserve candidate should fall outside of that single ranking. So for instance your intertwined single ranking may look like: 1 SURNAME Name SPIR QMPS; 2 SURNAME Name SPIR QMPS; 3 SURNAME Name SPIR BAME QMPS; 4 SURNAME Name SPIR SHF QMPS; 4 SURNAME Name SPIR BAME QMPS; (...) 8 SURNAME Name SPIR QMPS; + SHF RESERVE SURNAME Name SPIR QMPS

10. The Faculty Panel will meet to determine the allocation of HSS Principal's Studentships in mid-March 2024. The Faculty Panel will consist of the Deputy Dean for Research (PGR) as chair; the Dean for Research; the Deputy Dean for Research (Impact); and at least two external assessors. All panel members, including external assessors, must have undertaken the Challenging Unconscious Bias and the Equality and Diversity Briefing training (or the equivalent in their own institution for external assessors) since January 2021.

Criteria for awards at Faculty level

1. General and BAME applications will be judged against the following criteria: a) the quality of the research proposal; b) the preparedness of the applicant; c) the feasibility of the project; d) the School ranking. These criteria will be weighted as follows: **0.4, 0.2, 0.2, 0.2**.
2. SHF-HSS applications will be judged against the following criteria: a) the quality of the research proposal; b) the preparedness of the applicant; c) the feasibility of the project; d) the candidate's statement of purpose. These criteria will be weighted as follows: **0.4, 0.2, 0.2, 0.2**.
3. The 'Guidance to Applicants' document outlines how criteria a)-c) are understood, at both School and Faculty level. Applicants and supervisors are strongly advised to pay close attention to this document.
4. The separate SHF-QMUL HSS Studentship Explanatory memo describes how criterion d) (statement of purpose) will be assessed. Applicants and supervisors are strongly advised to pay close attention to this document.
5. Schools should be aware that when weighing up the relative merits of a number of very strong candidates, the Faculty panel inevitably pays considerable attention to the SNF. Supervisors and units are therefore encouraged to write as strong and as complete a nomination form as possible. To aid comparison between different candidates within the same unit, Schools are required to have one person (for example, the DGS) write Part 2 of all their nomination forms. This requirement applies regardless of the number of sub-units within a School.
6. In the event that a BAME student is recommended for an award in both the BAME and the general competitions, the award will be allocated from the general competition, and the recommendation in the BAME competition will devolve to the next highest ranked candidate.
7. Following the panel's deliberations, the DGS from each School will be invited to join the panel to be informed of the final distribution of awards to their candidates. Precise timings and date will be made available in due course. Please make sure that you or your delegate can attend.