REACH Collaborative Doctoral Partnership ('CDP') Consortium: Information Sheet for Expressions of Interest for studentships commencing in October 2026

The REACH CDP Consortium unites five nationally significant heritage institutions who together attract 38 million visitors per annum and combine 10 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. REACH collection resources range from the medieval to contemporary and cover visual and material culture, historic sites, architecture, landscape and archival holdings. REACH stands for 'Revisiting and Enhancing Approaches to Collections and Heritage' and encapsulates our joint commitment to innovative and impactful arts and humanities research, and the development of the next generation of cultural heritage professionals through the provision of exceptional work-based opportunities.

In July 2023, REACH was pleased to announce that it has been awarded a **second** AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership award (CDP4) to fund 13 collaborative doctoral studentships starting over the period 2024-2026.

Under CDP3 (2020-24) REACH was awarded 11 AHRC-funded collaborative doctoral studentships; these resulted in suite of cross-consortium doctoral projects developed with HEI partners and a flourishing student cohort, on which we aim to build in 2024-2026 under CDP4. For more details on REACH including current studentships see www.rmg.co.uk/collections/research/REACH

Who are we?
We are five Independent Research Organisations (IROs) with rich, extensive collections, a wide geographic spread, shared research interests and a strong collective track record of HEI collaboration through doctoral supervision and UKRI research grant participation:

- **Royal Museums Greenwich** (PI; IRO since 2006): comprises the National Maritime Museum, the Queen's House, the Royal Observatory, and the tea clipper *Cutty Sark*. Collections relate to British and global histories, maritime history, art, science and heritage science.

- **National Portrait Gallery** (IRO since 2006): promotes, through portraiture, appreciation of men and women who have contributed to British history and culture, and understanding of portraits in all media. Collections comprise paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs and archives.

- **Historic Royal Palaces** (IRO since 2014): responsible for the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace, Banqueting House Whitehall and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens. Collections include the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection and Architectural Drawings.

- **British Film Institute** (IRO since 2017): holds one of the world's largest collections of moving image materials including feature and documentary films, tv programmes, photographs, scripts, posters and personal papers.

- **National Trust** (IRO since 2019): Europe's largest conservation charity and one of the world's largest heritage organisations. Responsible for, among other things, 500 historic properties, alongside diverse landscapes, material culture, fine art and archival collections.

The consortium represents our desire to mobilise our shared research themes, the links across our world-class collections, buildings and landscapes, and our cross-disciplinary staff expertise.

What are REACH's research priorities?
Our overarching research theme is the **construction of diverse identities in British and global contexts, and their representation or invisibility within historic and contemporary heritage practices and debates**.

Our strategic aims are:
- to recover marginalised histories, champion new perspectives and tackle challenging histories;
- to promote the engagement of diverse audiences and communities with our collections;
- to foreground underused elements of our collections for research and public benefit;
- to reshape public and scholarly expectations of our holdings and institutional priorities, and create positive public outcomes from our doctoral research;
- to create a vibrant and diverse CDP cohort.

Call for Expressions of Interest ("EoI") for studentship proposals starting in October 2026

Expressions of Interest in submitting a collaborative studentship proposal are now being sought from HEIs to collaborate with **one or more** of the five REACH partner organisations listed above.

Themes
A key ambition of the REACH consortium is to forge *genuinely* cross-consortium projects, so we encourage HEI partners to approach us creatively, thinking **across our joint collections, histories, and concerns** and to relate the project to one or more of the REACH cross-cutting themes below:
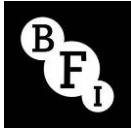
1. **Identities in British and global contexts**
2. **The migration of people, objects and ideas**
3. **Diverse and marginalised histories, particularly those relating to race, gender, sexuality, disability and class**
4. **Heritage narratives and public engagement**
5. **Conservation science, materiality and environments**
6. **Cultural approaches to science, technology and media**

Practice-based doctoral studentship proposals
REACH encourages and welcomes submission of practice-based collaborative PhD proposals. Potential co-supervisors should be aware when writing their proposals that they will be judged against the same criteria as more traditional PhD projects, and by a panel which will largely be comprised of non-practice-based experts. (If more guidance is required, please contact one of the REACH Committee members listed below.)

Disciplinary Areas
REACH encourages projects across the 3 AHRC Primary Research Areas: Histories, Cultures and Heritage; Creative and Performing Arts; Languages and Literature. Particular emphasis is placed on: History; Cultural and Museum Studies; Design; Media; Visual Arts; Archaeology; Information and Communication Technologies; Political Science and International Studies; Religion; and Literature. Work in aspects of defined AHRC interest in Area Studies and Cultural Geography will be supported.

Student experience
REACH uses its scale and close strategic alignment to construct a distinctive student experience, including: cross-consortium research projects and developmental placements; wide supervisory resources; clear structures for supervision, feedback and mentoring; flexible training and placement programmes across members; a vibrant consortium cohort; and outstanding opportunities for developing research, communication, project management and networking skills.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
When recruiting students, REACH is committed to widening participation and actively encourages applications from individuals whose backgrounds are under-represented in the heritage sector and the narratives it explores. If you are invited to submit a full application following your Expression of Interest, you will be asked to outline how you plan both to support the recruitment of students from diverse backgrounds and to foster an inclusive research environment, including how the student would be supported within your university context.

Ethical concerns
When writing an EoI please bear in mind that any potential ethical concerns arising from your doctoral proposal should be flagged early.

Duty of Care
REACH takes seriously its duty of care towards its students, especially in circumstances where they may be exposed to traumatic and/or sensitive subjects; and undertaking research in terms of doctoral themes of wider public sensitivity that might attract media or Press interest. The EoI must flag any areas of concern in this regard.

Supervisory Team
If you are invited to submit a full application following your EoI you will need to show how the supervisory team is a good fit for the project in terms of expertise and provision of appropriate support for the student within a wider university context.

Structure and duration of a CDP4 award and expectations in terms of placements
The CDP award made by the AHRC to the REACH consortium supports a **fully funded four-year doctoral studentship** (i.e. student stipend and university fees).

Within the four-year period, REACH has an expectation that students will undertake three-to-six-month's worth of student placement activity to further their skills and career development. This activity may be undertaken in a single block or as multiple placements, full or part time, with their REACH institution, another of the REACH partners, or elsewhere.

Although the final form of any placement is shaped in collaboration with the student once the CDP has commenced, it is our expectation that ideas for this student development activity is built into the project from inception.

Collaborative supervision
The development of any studentship project, and the subsequent supervision and management of it is a shared, coequal endeavour between the HEI and the REACH member institution (which as part of the REACH Consortium holds the collective AHRC CDP4 award). This relationship will be enshrined in a studentship collaboration agreement between the HEI, REACH partner and student using the template contract of the REACH partner. As part of this arrangement, we expect that **both** HEI and REACH co-supervisors will be involved in student recruitment, and that any decisions about the studentship, including press and media coverage, must involve both the HEI and REACH partners.

Criteria for assessment
Expression of interest proposals for a collaborative doctoral studentship with REACH will be assessed and sifted according to the follow principles (a detailed list of assessment criteria can be found in the Appendix below):

- Does it support the strategic objectives of the REACH partner organisation?
- Does it address the REACH themes?

- Has a discussion on the proposal taken place with the REACH partner, including the proposed supervisors and the relevant member of the REACH steering committee from that REACH partner? (see 'Committee' below for contact details)
- Is the project feasible in terms of methodology, scale, and source material?
- Have any ethical concerns been flagged and addressed, or is there a plan to address them prior to the submission of the full application?
- Is the quality of the proposed research project of a high standard?

Practical examples of cross-consortium doctoral projects

- A jointly conceived and co-supervised project between an HEI and **two** REACH partners which draws on both partners' sites, collections and subject matter equally (although one REACH partner will still need to be named as lead co-supervisor for administrative purposes);
- A project that is mostly led and co-supervised by **one** REACH partner (together with the HEI co-supervisor) because the majority of the collections and motivation for the project lies with this partner, but with an additional REACH partner named as 'second REACH co-supervisor' because they have important complementary collections, themes or expertise;
- A project where the involvement of a second REACH partner might not be significant enough to warrant official co-supervision. In these cases, that partner (or partners) may be listed on the project as 'providing access to collections or expertise that may help inform the project'.

If in any doubt, please ask for guidance. **You <u>must</u> contact the REACH partner organisation before submitting your EoI.** We reserve the right to reject EoIs where there has been no prior contact with the specified REACH partner.

To Apply

To submit an Expression of Interest, please complete the attached Expression of Interest form by **17.00 on 1st September 2025** and return to research@rmg.co.uk marked '**REACH EOI + [your surname]'**.

Selection Process

- The REACH steering committee will assess your EoI proposal at a sift meeting on 11 September and notify you of the outcome by 15 September.
- If your project is selected, you will be invited to complete a full application form, with a deadline of **27 October 2025**.
- A final external selection panel meeting will take place in November 2025 to select the final studentship projects to be submitted to the AHRC.

Enquiries before submitting an EoI

It is essential to contact the REACH institution(s) you would like to partner with **before** submitting an EoI.

Please direct EoI enquiries to the relevant institution within REACH, or if you have a general enquiry on REACH, to Sally Archer or to research@rmg.co.uk marked 'REACH EoI enquiry':

- **National Maritime Museum (Royal Museums Greenwich**) – Sally Archer sarcher@rmg.co.uk / Helen Mears hmears@rmg.co.uk

- **National Portrait Gallery** – Charlotte Bolland cbolland@npg.org.uk

- **Historic Royal Palaces** – Catherine Speight catherine.speight@hrp.org.uk / Jemima Hubberstey jemima.hubberstey@hrp.org.uk

- **British Film Institute** – Barry Dixon barry.dixon@bfi.org.uk /Claire Smith claire.smith@bfi.org.uk

- **National Trust** – Daisy Gibbs daisy.gibbs@nationaltrust.org.uk / Nicola Froggatt research@nationaltrust.org.uk

APPENDIX

REACH CDP Studentship EoI and Proposal Grading Criteria (October 2026 intake)

REACH proposals can either be:
    A. Cross-consortium proposals involving two or more REACH consortium members
   B. Proposals involving only one REACH partner

Proposals will be evaluated by the REACH selection panels with reference to the following criteria:

1. **Quality of research proposal**
   - Will the research lead to an original and substantial contribution to the knowledge of the subject matter?
   - Are there clear and answerable research questions?
   - Is this a doctoral project rather than a research project in search of a researcher?
   - Is there a clear methodology?

2. **Feasibility and practical arrangements**
   - If practice-based, is there sufficient detail on outputs from the proposal?
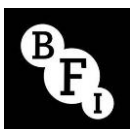
- o What will the student actually be doing?
- o Are the relevant collections cited 'research-ready'?
- o Is the project achievable in four years?
- o Are there any financial or other constraints, and have these been mitigated?
- o Are there any risks associated with the project, and how will these be managed?

3. **Collaborative research and partnership justification**
   - o Does the project align with the strategic priorities of the REACH partner? How does it benefit them?
   - o Is it relevant to the REACH themes?
   - o Is there sufficient justification for why this should be undertaken as a <u>collaborative</u> PhD?
   - o Is there a good fit between the supervisory team and the project in terms of appropriate expertise and also the ability to support the student on this project?
   - o Are there adequate supervisory arrangements in place and has distance and travel been considered?

4. **Student recruitment, development and support**
   - o How much scope is there for the student to develop the project?
   - o Have the applicants given thought to who might apply for this studentship, and how they would advertise and recruit from a wide and diverse range of potential students, ideally from groups under-represented at this level?
   - o Does the proposal demonstrate how the successful student's needs would be supported in an inclusive way e.g. accessing relevant institutional support?
   - o Do they show appreciation of what training the student might need to undertake the research?
   - o Does the proposal show sufficient thought about the careers the project might lead to?
   - o Is there sufficient consideration of ethical issues on the project?
   - o Does the proposal adequately consider duty of care with regards to sensitive material and general pastoral support for the student?

GRADING

The proposal is **exceptional**; it meets each assessment criterion to an exceptional level.	**10**
The proposal is **outstanding**; it strongly meets **each** assessment criterion to an outstanding level.	**9**
The proposal is **excellent**; it meets **each** assessment criterion to a very high level but with some minor weaknesses / limitations.	**8**
The proposal is **very good**; it meets **each** assessment criterion to a high level but with minor weaknesses / limitations.	**7**

The proposal is **good**; it meets **each** of the assessment criterion well but has weaknesses or limitations in some respects.	**6**
The proposal is **adequate**; it meets **each** of the assessment criterion adequately but has clear weaknesses / limitations	**5**
The proposal is **weak**; it meets **each** assessment criterion to an adequate level but has significant weaknesses / limitations	**4**
The proposal is **poor**; it meets **each** of assessment criterion poorly and has weaknesses / limitations	**3**
The proposal is **unsatisfactory**; it meets **each** of the assessment criteria poorly and has significant weaknesses / limitations or flaws.	**2**
The proposal is **not suitable for funding**; it does not meet **any** of the assessment criteria.	**1**
The proposal is unsuitable for consideration.	**0**