

## **AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards at the Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium**

The Arts and Humanities Research Council has encouraged non-HEI organisations across the UK to join a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme in order to support and deliver high quality doctoral research and training. As part of this scheme, National Museums Scotland (NMS), National Galleries of Scotland (NGS), Historic Scotland (HS) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) have come together to form the Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium (SCHC). The Consortium will allocate four awards a year for three years, starting in October 2013.

The SCHC brings together three of Scotland's National Collections plus its National Heritage Agency, all of whom are internationally respected for their work in researching, documenting and promoting understanding of material culture. The aims of the consortium are to:

- Deliver world-class research and high quality studentships that promote collaboration between the academic community and our work and collections
- Encourage inter- and cross-disciplinary doctoral research on material culture that contributes to the strategic objectives of the organisations and has public impact
- Build a positive training and development environment that shares skills across our organisations and promotes integrated access to our collections
- Maximise the impact and value of the research generated by working collaboratively to provide routes for sharing both between organisations and with a wider public
- Add economic value by providing training and opportunities that enhance the employability of students.

### **Research strategy and context**

The research undertaken by the studentships supported by the Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium will fall under the following three research themes:

1. History of Scottish material culture
2. Analysis and interpretation of material culture
3. Impact and understanding of collections and the historic environment

These themes are all embraced within the individual research strategies and priorities of the four national bodies that make up the consortium. This gives the clear potential for both joint and complimentary research topics to be developed through the lifetime of the CDP, leading to closer collaboration between the organisations, as well as ensuring that the resulting research has greater impact.

Research of the type to be undertaken by the studentships is highly valued by the governing bodies of all the consortium members, contributed to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework outcome which calls for Scotland to be 'renowned for our research and innovation', and will make a significant contribution to the intellectual well-being of each of the consortium partner organisations.

By operating the CDP as a consortium, we can deliver a consistent programme of research that delivers on each organisation's long term research goals. By working together we believe that new ideas will be stimulated, new partnerships inspired, knowledge spread and shared, and both scholarship and research agendas will be protected and enhanced. In short this consortium CDP will strengthen and extend the delivery of high quality collaborative research in Scotland.

### **Enhancing the student experience**

The SCHC will facilitate and encourage all of its students to operate as a cohort, sharing best practice, providing mutual support intellectually, morally and socially, and disseminating this work. As national organisations with strong public programmes we are well placed to provide opportunities for the presentation of research to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Within the partner organisations there is the opportunity for work shadowing and/or work placements, across a very wide set of skills and specialists, to help expose students to the career paths potentially available to them. The student will also benefit from many of the opportunities afforded to staff, from access to secure areas, specialist expertise and colleagues and both regular and specialist equipment, to attending lectures and seminars, participating in healthy working lives initiatives, and having their voice heard in relevant department meetings or strategy discussions.

### **Provision of support and training**

In addition to providing management and supervision, the SCHC have developed a training partnership that mirrors (and interacts with) the partnership being developed by the AHRC-recognised organisations in London. This scheme will provide training for students to develop the specific research skills needed for historic environment, museum, library and archival research. It will also enable students to learn from educators, web teams, exhibition designers, interpretation staff and curators/librarians about engaging different audiences through different media.

The consortium will provide an optional training programme for students, based around existing training activities within the partner organisations as well as developing specific training tailored to the particular needs of students. Students will have access to a range of training courses, workshops and seminars, including attendance at CPD events and specialist conferences. Wherever possible the CDP students will be taught alongside those from other organisations within the partnership, staff and students funded by other schemes. In addition, AHRC have provided funds to allow Scottish based CDP students to attend a bespoke three day training event in London in years one and two of their studentship.

Each member of the consortium offers major contributions in kind to individual students and the CDP scheme as a whole, through investment of staff time in management and supervision, providing access to specialist equipment and collections, as well as provision of work space, access to IT, photocopiers, printers, and other support such as the digitisation of material. The partners will also provide a limited direct financial support for expenses incurred by each student in connection with their research on behalf of the partner organisation.

### **Programme for 2015**

The organisations in the Consortium can each take forward up to three proposals every year to be considered by the Selection Panel. Each will run an internal competition to prioritise the proposals to go forward. Nationally, all CDP applications have a deadline for submission to their selection panels of 28 November 2014, and all are holding their selection panel meetings in mid-January 2015. This will allow advertising for students from February 2015, for a September 2015 start date.

The principal contacts for those interested in applying to the Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium are given below. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss projects at as early a stage as possible with the relevant organisational partner. Note that because each organisation is

permitted to submit a maximum of only three projects for consideration by the Selection Panel, first drafts of applications must be submitted to the relevant organisation well in advance of the 28 November deadline, in order to allow sufficient time for internal review, feedback and assessment. Potential applications should check with the relevant organisational partner over internal competition deadlines, which will usually be around 4 weeks earlier.

Contacts:

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland:

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