



**REACH Collaborative Doctoral Partnership ('CDP') Consortium**  
**Information Sheet for**  
**Expressions of Interest for studentships commencing in October 2025**

The REACH CDP Consortium unites 5 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 2024-2027.

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 2024-2027 under CDP4. For current studentships see [www.rmg.co.uk/collections/research/REACH](http://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 organizations. 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 for studentship proposals starting in October 2025**

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**

One of the key student benefits of the consortium, 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 actively seeks applications from individuals whose backgrounds are under-represented in the heritage sector and the histories it communicates. When writing an EoI please bear in mind that should you be invited to submit a full application you will be asked how you intend to encourage and support recruitment of students from diverse backgrounds.

### **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, including but not limited to: the undertaking of any emotionally demanding research such as into traumatic 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.

### **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 HEI and REACH partners.

### **Criteria for assessment**

Expression of interest proposals for a collaborative doctoral studentship with REACH will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Does it support the strategic objectives of the REACH partner organization?
- 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 completely 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 must contact the REACH member organisation before submitting your EoI.**

### **Process and Deadline**

To submit an Expression of Interest, please complete the attached Expression of Interest form by **18.00 on Monday 30 September 2024** and return to [research@rmg.co.uk](mailto:research@rmg.co.uk) marked 'REACH EoI'.

Your proposal will then be assessed as quickly as possible by the REACH steering committee, and if your project is suitable, you will be invited to complete a full application for your proposal, with a deadline of (approx.) Friday 29 November 2024. A final external panel assessment will then take place in January 2025 to determine the final studentship projects that will be submitted to the AHRC.

### **REACH Committee members - contact details by REACH partner**

- **National Maritime Museum (Royal Museums Greenwich)** – Sally Archer [sarcher@rmg.co.uk](mailto:sarcher@rmg.co.uk) / Helen Mears [hmears@rmg.co.uk](mailto:hmears@rmg.co.uk)
- **National Portrait Gallery** – Charlotte Bolland [cbolland@npg.org.uk](mailto:cbolland@npg.org.uk)
- **Historic Royal Palaces** – Laura Tompkins [laura.tompkins@hrp.org.uk](mailto:laura.tompkins@hrp.org.uk)
- **British Film Institute** – Barry Dixon [barry.dixon@bfi.org.uk](mailto:barry.dixon@bfi.org.uk) / Claire Smith [claire.smith@bfi.org.uk](mailto:claire.smith@bfi.org.uk)
- **National Trust** – Nicola Froggatt [research@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:research@nationaltrust.org.uk)

**General enquiries for REACH:** Sally Archer [sarcher@rmg.co.uk](mailto:sarcher@rmg.co.uk)