Durham University

PhD Studentships in Transformative Humanities

Information and Q&A Session

UKRI

Arts and Humanities Research Council

Introducing Our Speakers

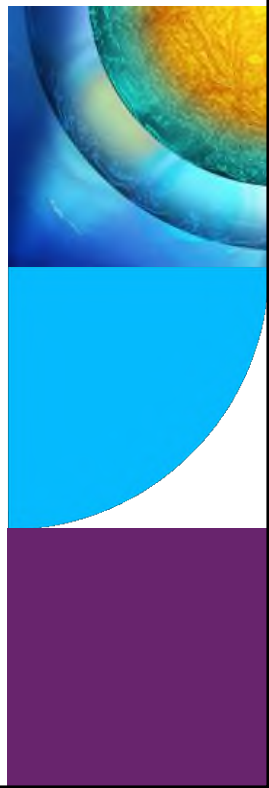
Prof. **Alberto Rigolio**, Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research

Prof. **Robert Song**, Department of Theology and Religion

Prof. **Sarah Semple**, Department of Archaeology

Ms. **Katrin Krauss**, Faculty Postgraduate Research Coordinator

For questions, you can reach us at
artsandhumanities.pgrteam@durham.ac.uk



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Inspiring the extraordinary

Welcome to Durham

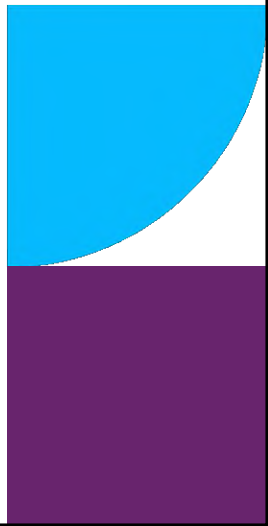


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Transformative Humanities

Transformative humanities: the context

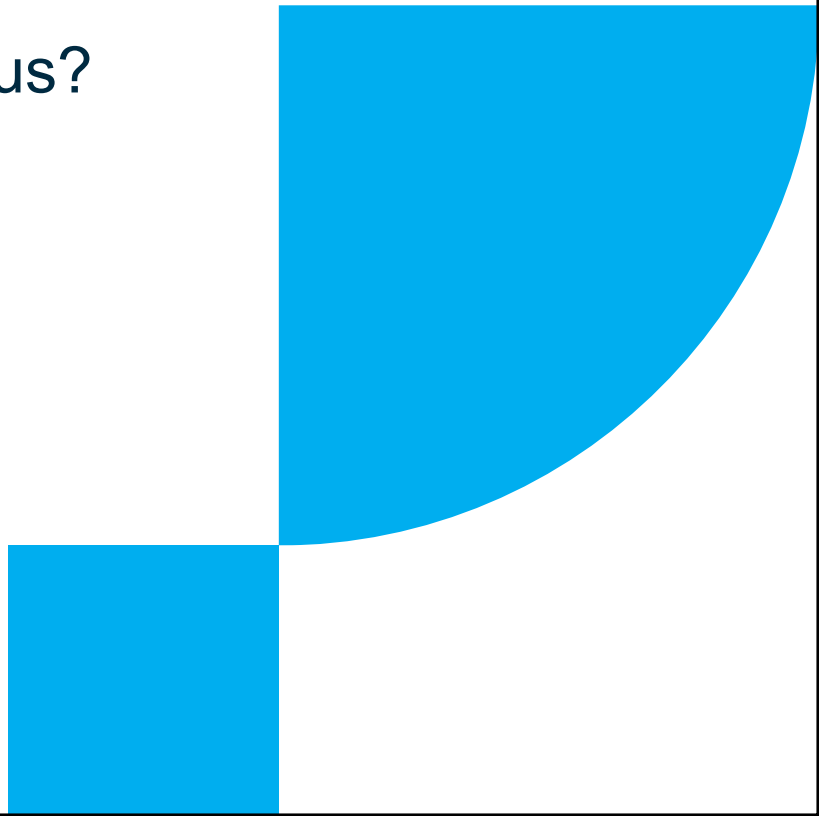
- An uncertain world
- Government and public emphasis on STEM subjects
- Arts and humanities on the defensive?
- Conventional responses no longer adequate?



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Transformative humanities: the rationale

- Questioning the STEM consensus?
- Are the humanities underselling themselves?
- Making the humanities publicly intelligible without selling out



Transformative humanities is…

- Enriching, shaping and transforming lives
- Nurturing thoughtful, critical, engaged citizens for a rapidly changing and complex world
- Inherently interdisciplinary



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Creativity, Culture, and Heritage

Innovative approaches to heritage: landscape, collections, visual culture, heritage science, local to global. Rooted in partner-led challenge and community engagement.



Digital Humanities

Data-driven research from machine-learning, linguistics, and stylometry, to AI and museum collections management, object analysis, and human movement and music.



Environmental Humanities

Global research, from African mega-fauna, environmental activism, literary eco-criticism, Arctic experience, heat in Asian cities, to climate change and migration.



Medical Humanities

Cross-cutting research and impact on Health and Human Experience: the Institute of Medical Humanities Discovery Research Platform, Moral Injury, Death and Life Studies.



Science-Humanities

Distinctive collaborative research on the history and practice of science: ancient mathematics, medieval astronomy and meteorology, emergence, and medical learning.



Social Justice, Communities, and Policy

High impact research on education policy - Classics for All; democratic activity – Elections and Petitions; human dignity – health, refugees, death, community-building.

The environmental humanities can help us to understand:

- how people have responded to crises throughout history and across different cultures
- how Western responses have often been marked by Eurocentric assumptions
- how people engage with crisis with their imaginations and through literature
- how fundamental philosophical questions about the world and our place in it are raised by the environmental crises
- how theological and religious dimensions of questions about loss, hope, and meaning are raised by the ecological crises

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Some current projects (1):

- Extinction as loss of an *Umwelt*
- Floods, heat and health in Wuhan
- Early childhood years and the development of a sense of the natural world
- Music, plants and indigenous cosmologies

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Some current projects (2):

- How understanding games could help COPs go better
- What Newcastle looks like from the point of view of a kittiwake
- How to write gardens
- What does it mean to hope if optimism is dead?





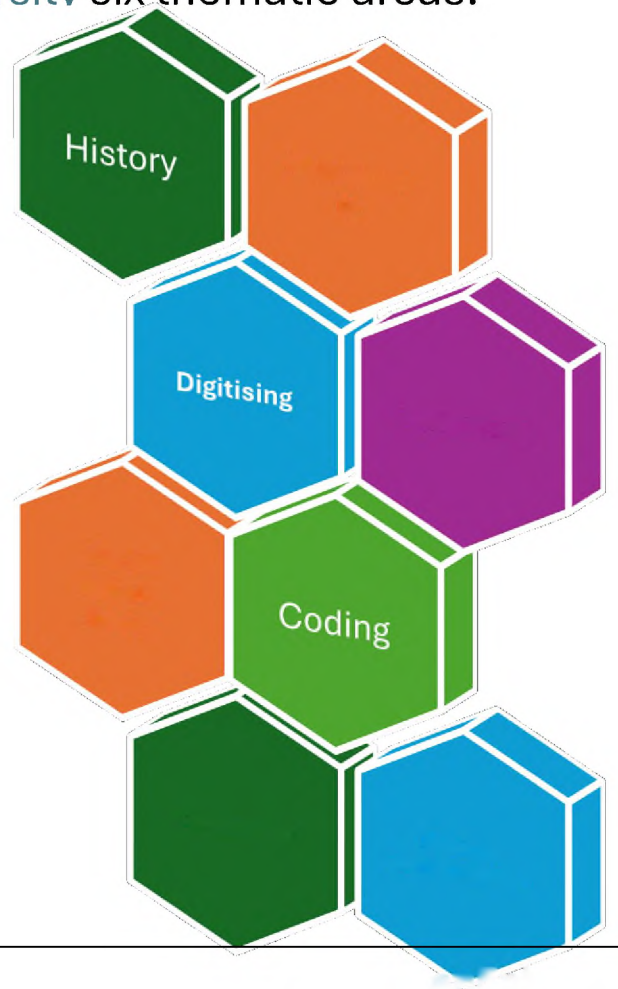
Shaping your proposal
Team development

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Alignment to Transformative Humanities

- Great idea – but needs to compete within context of six themes
- Projects must fall within the Transformative Humanities - Durham University six thematic areas:
  - Culture, Creativity, and Heritage
  - Digital Humanities
  - Environmental Humanities
  - Medical Humanities
  - Science-Humanities
  - Social Justice, Communities, and Policy

NOT LIMITED to these……



Digital Humanities is the **application of digital methods to research in the humanities and cultural heritage**, such as **computational studies of music, text or images** and the use of **humanities methods to understand digital phenomena, including the ethics and social impact** of AI and cyberspace history.

Read the themes carefully and identify how best to fit and develop your application within these six areas.

More than the sum of its parts – think interdisciplinary/multi disciplinary in ter
skills

The project package

Drafting a first proposal…

- What is the research context? What makes this project original, timely and innovative?
- What are the goals/ aims?

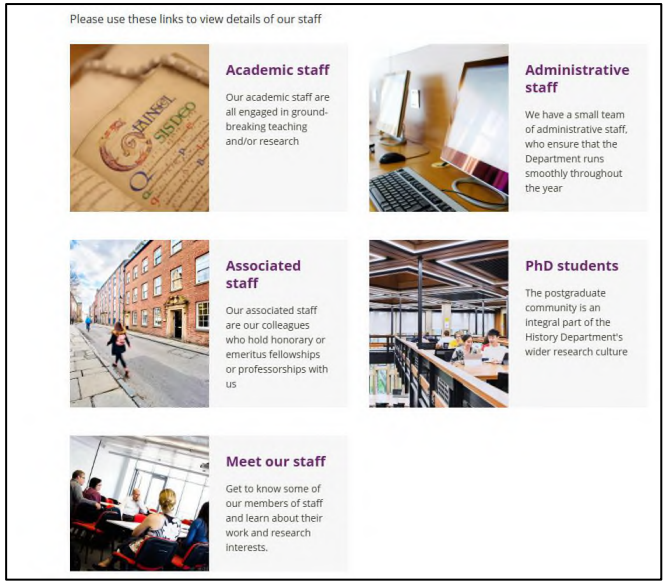
- What are your research questions? What questions will you ask to get you to the outcomes you want?
- What datasets are your building blocks? Archives, objects, buildings, texts?
- What are the objectives? What steps will you take with your datasets to answer your research questions? What methods will you use?
- What are you bringing to the project? Linkage to previous research/skills training at MA/MSc level?

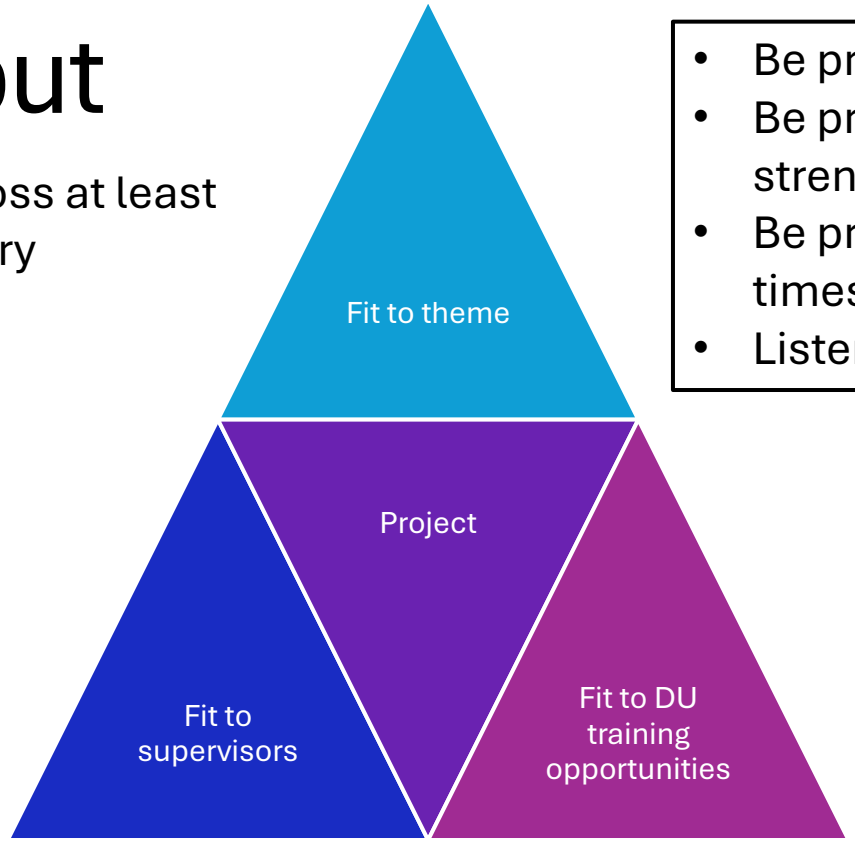


Supervisors and input

Supervision must include collaboration across at least two departments. Think multi-interdisciplinary distinctiveness!

- Approach an expert in the field….
- Primary supervisor must be in AH/Social Science depts. e.g. MLAC, History, English, Archaeology – 2nd can be any dept
- History Staff - Durham University





- Be prepared for critical feedback
- Be prepared to modify and strengthen the project
- Be prepared to redraft several times
- Listen to advice

- Email the experts – directly aligned to your field (or DRPGs)
- Have your ideas on paper…previous slide
- Ask for feedback and suggestions for additional supervisory expertise
- Arrange to meet and discuss the project online
- Ask about distinctive training opportunities or relevant resources: archives, collections, laboratories

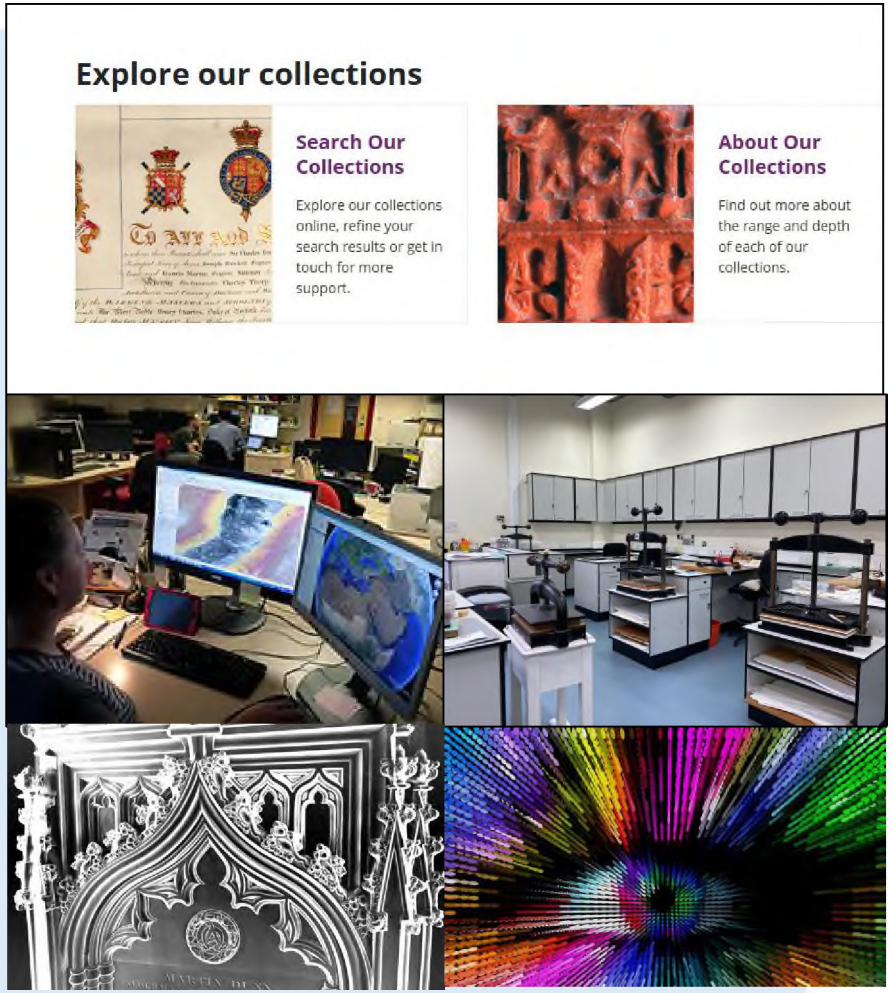
Fit to resources and training opportunities

What training do you need to do this project?

What are you bringing already?
MSc/MA research
Additional training
Publication/communication experience (short articles, blogs, podcasts)
Professional experience (volunteering or working in relevant sectors)
Relevant skills sets e.g. GIS, coding, theoretical knowledge

What additional skills do you need?
Why is Durham the best place to provide them?
What facilities and labs and methods do you need?
What training do you need to make the most of these?
Are there national or international assets you will need access to?
Can the funding provide the costs needed for travel or training?

Archives and Special Collections - Durham University
Conservation - Durham University
Facilities and Equipment - Durham University
Laboratories - Durham University
Centre for Visual Arts and Culture - Durham University
Oriental Museum Collections - Durham University
Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies - Durham University



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PhD Awards

Studentship Details	
Duration	3.5 years (full-time) or 7 years (part-time)
Financial Support	• Full Tuition Fee • Annual Stipend at the UKRI rate, currently £21,805 (for 26/27, tax-free)
Additional Support	• Training and research funds • Specialized development and training programmes
11 awards for entry in October 2027	• Nine available for Home students • Two available for Overseas students, covering the overseas tuition fee

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Eligibility

Supervisory Lead	You must be accepted as a PhD student with a lead supervisor in either the **Faculty of Arts and Humanities** or the **Faculty of Social Sciences** Classics and Ancient History English Studies History Modern Languages and Cultures Music Philosophy Theology and Religion Anthropology Archaeology Education Geography Government and International Affairs Law Sociology Sport and Exercise Studies
Interdisciplinary Collaboration	Your supervisory team must include collaboration across at least two Departments at Durham University
International Entry Requirements and English Language Requirements	• https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/international/entry-requirements/ • https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/international/entry-requirements/english-language-requirements/english-language-levels-required/

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Application Documents

As part of your application, please submit the following documents:

- **Research Proposal** that clearly defines research questions and context, the intended approach and methods, the relevance of the project to transformative humanities, and the fit with Durham University (max. 1,000 words)
- A **CV**
- An **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form**, to be filled in online at the main page of the scheme: https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/arts-humanities/study/postgraduate-funding/phd-studentships-in-transformative-humanities/
- The name and contacts of **Two Referees**, who will automatically receive instructions on how to submit reference letters in support of the application – referees will have two weeks to submit their letters

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Application Process and Key Dates

- Contact potential supervisor(s) to discuss your project.
- Submit your complete PhD application **by 15 January 2027 (noon UK time)**, via our online portal (SITS): please select the link of the lead department from this page: https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/arts-humanities/study/postgraduate-funding/phd-studentships-in-transformative-humanities/
- In the applicant portal, in the section "Have you or do you intend to apply for a scholarship or studentship to fund your studies?," please type "**Transformative Humanities**."
- Successful applicants will be notified in March 2027.
- For further information, see https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/arts-humanities/study/postgraduate-funding/phd-studentships-in-transformative-humanities/

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Questions