



Sustainable Rural Futures (SURF) Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships Programme

Guidance for Applicants

What funding is available?

SURF scholars will receive a stipend aligned with UKRI awards (currently £18,622 subject to annual increase) and PhD fees. The fees and stipends are payable for 4 years. You will also receive £10,000 to support your research and training over the 4 years.

How many scholarships are available?

Funding is available for 18 standard 4-year scholarships and 3 Masters+ 5-year scholarships.

What is a Masters+ Award?

In addition to the standard 4-year studentship we have funding for three Masters + awards. These awards are for 5 years of stipends and fees. In the first year you will register for one of the following Masters programmes:

MRes Humanities (English)

MA in Human Geography and Sustainability Research

MRes Humanities (History)

MSc in Geoscience Research

MRes Social Science Research Methods

MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation

To be eligible for a Masters + award you must be a UK domiciled student and apply under one of the following criteria:

- Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black African or Other mixed background (including Black African, Black Caribbean or Black Other) heritage.
- Receipt of full maintenance loan or Special Support Loan during your undergraduate studies.

If you are applying for a Masters + scholarship you should complete the final section on the application form outlining how your chosen Masters programme will develop your research skills.

Do I need a Masters to apply for a standard scholarship?

You do not need a Masters qualification to apply for a SURF scholarship. You will be required to demonstrate that you are suitability qualified (based on academic learning and other relevant experience) for your project as part of the application process.

Can SURF scholarships be held part-time?

You can apply for a part-time scholarship to accommodate caring responsibilities or disability. All requests for part-time study will need to be approved by the Leverhulme Trust. Applications for part-time scholarships to accommodate part-time working will not be accepted. If you are interested in part-time study please contact the SURF team for advice at surf@keele.ac.uk

Can International students apply for a SURF scholarship?

We have funding for one international scholarship in each cohort (which covers fees for student who do not qualify for UK domicile fees). If you are unsure about what fees are applicable to you, please contact the SURF team at surf@keele.ac.uk

We expect competition for SURF international scholarships to be competitive.

How do I find out about named SURF projects?

The list of SURF projects and principle supervisors is available on the SURF website. If you are interested in applying for a SURF project you are strongly recommend to contact the principle supervisor to talk about your application.

Can I submit my own project?

You can submit your own project to be considered for a SURF doctoral scholarship. This project must address research questions relevant to rural communities in the UK. Your project should align with at least one, and preferably two, SURF themes as follows:

- **landscape** captures how both shared and conflicted meanings of the rural have been co-produced over time.
- **land use** addresses rural activity in the present and formal demarcations of rural activity and territoriality.
- **livelihood** orientates projects towards the economic and social realities facing rural communities.
- **lifestyle** embraces how identities are inscribed into rural practices.

If possible, you should identify a supervisor from the staff profiles on the SURF website to discuss your project ideas before submitting your application. If you cannot identify a suitable supervisor please contact the SURF team for advice at surf@keele.ac.uk

Can I apply for more than one SURF project?

You can only apply for one SURF project **or** one student-led project. Multiple applications may result in your application ruled invalid.

What PhD programme can I enrol for?

All SURF projects should develop interdisciplinary approaches, though you will have a home discipline and you will be registered for a PhD in this discipline. The PhD programmes available for SURF scholars are:

- Biology
- Economics
- Environment
- Geography (Physical)
- History
- Media, Communications and Culture
- Psychology
- Computer Science
- English
- Geography (Human)
- Geology
- Law
- Politics and International Relations
- Sociology

How do I apply for a SURF scholarship?

Applications are made via the online application portal for postgraduate research degrees at Keele University. You should apply for the Leverhulme pathway, which you can access from the SURF webpage <link>.

In addition to completing this application from your will need to upload a copy of your CV and the completed SURF application form, which is available on the SURF webpage. You will also need to give the names and contact details for two referees in support of your application.

Please note there are **TWO** versions of the application form, one for SURF project calls and the second for student-led projects. Please ensure you have selected the correct application form.

How should I complete the application form for a SURF project?

For applications for SURF projects you are asked to expand on the following sections:

- Why you are interested in the project and what academic approaches or literature do you think are relevant for its development (maximum 500 words). We are looking for your interpretation of the project outline and possible research questions. You do not need to address all of the proposed research questions, but should clarify the aspects of the project that are of most interest to you. A good application will draw on appropriate academic literature and situate your approach within a disciplinary perspective. You should also consider how interdisciplinary applications are relevant to the project.
- What methodologies and data analysis do you propose to use for this project? (maximum 250 words). For this section you need to address the methods that you propose to use to answer the research questions outlined in the previous section. Along with methods for data collection or capture you should also describe how you intend to analyse the data. If appropriate you should outline any ethical issues that emerge from your proposed methodology.
- What societal impact do you think this project can have, and how can this impact be realised? (maximum 250 words). SURF projects are designed to benefit rural communities and stakeholders, as well as promote interdisciplinary approaches to rural studies. In this section you should identify the potential non-academic beneficiaries of your chosen project (for example rural communities, voluntary and third sector organisations, businesses and agriculture, visitors and policy makers). You should also propose ways of engaging with these potential beneficiaries.
- What training will you require to carry out this project? This may include developing your academic knowledge, methodologies and data analysis skills, collaboration engagement and impact skills. (maximum 250 words). In this section you should identify additional training needs that you will require to complete the project.

How should I complete the application form for a student-led project?

For applications for student-led projects you are asked to provide a title for your project at the top of the form and expand on the following sections:

- Please describe the aims and research questions for this project and what academic approaches or literature do you think are relevant for its development? (maximum 500 words). In this section you should state your aims and objectives for your research project. Your research questions should be focussed towards realisable

outcomes. It might help to link your objectives to your methodology (in the following section). You should also outline how your project will develop existing literature.

- What methodologies and data analysis do you propose to use for this project? (maximum 250 words). For this section you need to address the methods that you propose to use to answer the research questions outlined in the previous section. Along with methods for data collection or capture you should also describe how you intend to analyse the data. If appropriate you should outline any ethical issues that emerge from your proposed methodology.
- What societal impact do you think this project can have, and how can this impact be realised? (maximum 250 words). SURF projects are designed to benefit rural communities and stakeholders, as well as promote interdisciplinary approaches to rural studies. In this section you should identify the potential non-academic beneficiaries of your proposed project (for example rural communities, voluntary and third sector organisations, businesses and agriculture, visitors and policy makers). You should also propose ways of engaging with these potential beneficiaries.
- How does this project align with SURF themes (Landscape, Land Use, Livelihood and Lifestyle) and how will it address SURF principles of collaborative research and more-than-human approaches? (maximum 250 words). All SURF projects should align with at least one theme and in this section you should outline how your project aligns with your chosen theme(s), as well as the principles of collaborative research and more-than-human approaches.
- What training will you require to carry out this project? This may include developing your academic knowledge, methodologies and data analysis skills, collaboration engagement and impact skills. (maximum 250 words). In this section you should identify additional training needs that you will require to complete the project.

What criteria will my application be assessed against?

We will apply the following criteria:

1. Skills and experience of candidate commensurate with learning experience. Candidates without a Masters qualification will not be disadvantaged.
2. Suitability of the candidate's experience for the chosen project, to include knowledge of subject areas and/or key methodologies to be used.

Who will make decisions about awarding SURF scholarships?

The selection committee will comprise of the directors and co-directors of SURF, the Director of the Keele Doctoral Academy and representatives from SURF supervisors.