

## **AHRC Collections & Communities in the East of England Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP)**

### **PhD studentship: The history and heritage of the discovery of environmental change and the interpretation of place in the East of England**

- Start date: 1st October 2025
- Application Deadline: 16 May 2025
- Interviews will take place online on 10 and 11 June 2025
- Information session online 22 April 2025, 4.00-5.00pm [Register your interest](#)
- If you would like to arrange an in-person visit prior to applying, please contact Katrina Dean (kjd32@cam.ac.uk)

The University of Cambridge and its University Library are pleased to announce a fully-funded Collaborative doctoral studentship, from October 2025, under the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme.

This project will be jointly supervised by Professor Richard Staley (Department of History and Philosophy of Science, HPS Department) and Dr Katrina Dean (University Library, UL) in association with Dr Josh Nall (Whipple Museum of the History of Science) and Dr Liz Hide (Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences). The student will undertake research at the UL, Whipple and Sedgwick museums and the HPS Department as well as becoming part of the wider cohort of CDP-funded students across the UK.

#### **Project Overview**

This project will explore how local and global understandings of climate and the environment have been created in the east of England, by examining the sites, museum collections and academic research groups working in the twentieth century that have delivered new understandings of place and changing climate in the Quaternary geological period (dating from around 2.58 million years ago to the present) in this region. It takes advantage of several archival and museum collections of documents, instruments, specimens, as well as archaeological and geological sites, to invite innovative research that investigates how deeper understandings of place in the east of England were developed. The project will offer the student the opportunity to work across two or three areas of focus, including 1) archival research on scientific studies of long-term environmental and climatic change, 2) fieldwork drawing on approaches from the humanities to establish a study of climate in place, examining one or more archaeological sites and communities in the east of England to explore how academic researchers changed understandings of place and worked with local communities at long-term research sites to relate different elements of climate, agriculture and landscape 3) the treatment of climate through geological specimens, scientific instruments, and archaeological research and displays in museums, exploring how collections have been assembled, used, curated and interpreted to establish changing perspectives on place and time, and how climate and place

have been represented. Together with the team of supervisors, the successful candidate will develop a project to interrogate the histories of research and collections relating to long-range environmental change in the University of Cambridge (including the UL, Whipple and Sedgwick museums) and potentially of related natural history and archaeological collections and interpretation in regional museums, exploring their connections to regional fieldwork and places. This project may use archives and objects of directors of the Sub-department for Quaternary Research, Richard West (University Library); Nick Shackleton (Royal Society) and Harry Godwin (Whipple Museum) and other archives in the UL including the Fenland Research Committee and University Archives; archives of climatologists Hubert Lamb, (University of East Anglia) and Gordon Manley (UL); Richard West shell bed material (Sedgwick Museum); the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs; oral history interviews (including with Richard West and Mike Hall at the British Library); and collections and interpretation at Norfolk and Peterborough museums and Flag Fen. The following questions indicate some of the directions of possible research:

- What was the role of fieldwork in the East of England in developing new perspectives on human and environmental change, and how were sites and places (re)interpreted over time?
- What techniques and methodological developments enabled the establishment of new geochronologies of environmental change in Britain throughout the Quaternary geological period, and how did this impact the dating of fossil and archaeological finds, and regional comparisons?
- Who participated in the multidisciplinary knowledge communities of long-term environmental change in the field, the laboratory and the museum, and how was this reflected in the distribution of resources, labour and credit?
- What roles did collections play as evidence for scientific developments? How were different kinds of evidence gathered, processed and assembled in collections and narrated in scientific accounts? What was the role of museums as sites of preservation and public interpretation incorporating scientific findings into public narratives?

The precise focus can be moulded by the student who will be supported in selecting which collections, research groups, case studies, timescales, sites, and places on which to focus in developing their argument and determining the structure of the research and thesis. The student may also engage with scientific and resident communities in the region who have been involved in some of the research and archaeological finds that shape our understanding of the regional environment and human impacts.

The primary outcome will be the first historical account of how interdisciplinary scientific researchers in Britain applied themselves to the study of long-range environmental change, which is also a study of climate in place. Other outcomes include drawing connections among the University's environmental collections of archives, scientific instruments, samples and artefacts and making links with regional collections to tell the story of environmental change in the region.

## Benefits and Opportunities

This collaborative PhD studentship offers the opportunity to develop skills and experience for careers in libraries, archives and museums and transferable skills in public engagement with research.

As the CDP programme emphasises work-based skills, the four years of funding (up to seven years part-time), includes PhD research but also development activities including internships and placements, as applicable to meet the successful student's needs. At the outset of their PhDs, students will complete an individual training needs analysis and plan. This is a unique opportunity to gain a wide range of transferable professional skills, including public engagement and interpretation of collections. Through a placement in the Sedgwick Museum working with public engagement specialists, the student will develop their skills and confidence in face-to-face public engagement. This can include the development and delivery of an event or events on themes relevant to their project when they will have the opportunity to share and discuss their research with public audiences. Through a placement at the Whipple Museum working with curators and collection managers the student will have the opportunity to enhance cataloguing, interpretation and display of quaternary-related objects. Through a placement with the external engagement teams at the UL, the student will have the opportunity to shape a major public programme.

The Department of History and Philosophy of Science has an outstanding international reputation for its stimulating research environment, and strengths in the history and philosophy of climate, the life sciences and natural history pertinent to this studentship. With 16 teaching officers, around 45 doctoral students, a strong cohort of MPhil and Part III students, postdoctoral researchers and affiliated scholars, the Department fosters an exceptionally active intellectual life. Thriving seminars, reading groups and workshops provide a focus, allowing students to help set the agenda and present their own work among peers. Students are supported throughout their studies, with close attention paid to methodological development, research skills and career advice. At the heart of the Department is the Whipple Museum, a world-class collection of scientific instruments and models, including instruments relating to the work of the Cambridge Subdepartment of Quaternary Research and the careers of Harry Godwin, Richard West, and Robin Andrew, amongst others. The Department's Whipple Library is an unparalleled specialist collection for history and philosophy of science and medicine.

Cambridge University Library (the UL) is one of the world's oldest university libraries – and home to one of the world's great collections of cultural treasures and research materials including its Special Collections in manuscript, printed and artefact form, designated internationally significant by Arts Council England. Renowned for its collection of scientific archives and manuscripts including the papers of Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin and Stephen Hawking, the Library preserves and continues to collect contemporary scientific archives including environmental and regional research. The Library is home to its own Research Institute drawing on the Library's expertise, collections and infrastructure, currently supporting 35 funded research projects, and will be hosting two CC-EE doctoral students in the history of science and related fields starting in 2025.

The Sedgwick Museum houses an internationally recognised collection of around 2 million rocks, fossils and mineral specimens. Founded in 1728, the collection is of considerable historical as well as scientific importance, and is actively growing through the research activities of the Department of Earth Sciences. An important historical archive comprises field notebooks, photographs and maps associated with the collections and the Department's research activities. The Museum welcomes around 100,000 public visitors annually, and has thriving programmes for schools and public visitors.

The Whipple Museum's extraordinary collections document the diverse and innovative material culture of past science, as practiced both within the University of Cambridge and beyond it. Designated as internationally-significant by Arts Council England, the collections comprise around 8,000 objects including scientific instruments, apparatus, models, pictures, photographs, ephemera, and associated material relating to the history of science from the medieval period to the present. The Museum is embedded within the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, and plays an active role in the Department's teaching and research programmes. This work then informs the Museum's displays and public engagement work, as part of its mission to use collections to explore, challenge, and share stories from the history of science.

The successful candidate will be encouraged to participate in professional development events and activities organised for all Collaborative Doctoral Partnership students who are registered with different universities studying with cultural heritage organisations across the UK. These activities are organised by a coordination team based at the V&A and are designed to provide CDP researchers with the knowledge, networks and skills to thrive in their future careers.

### Details of Award

Funding for each studentship will be for four years' duration (or up to seven years part-time), with the expectation that this will include development activities, as applicable to meet the student's needs, and the thesis will be submitted within the funding period.

This award pays tuition fees up to the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees. The Research Council UK Indicative Fee Level for 2025/2026 is £5,006. The fee gap between the home and overseas fee rates will be covered by the University of Cambridge through internal co-funding for international candidates.

A full maintenance stipend is provided for both home and international students. The UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2025/2026 is £20,780.

The successful candidate will also have access to a Research Training and Support Grant (RTSG) of £750 per year, (pro-rata for part-time students). This can be used to support study visits, conference attendance, training and development opportunities which are necessary for the student's primary research. In addition, the award provides a CDP maintenance payment of £600 per year supporting any additional costs students incur whilst undertaking a collaborative award.

Further details can be found on the UKRI [website](#).

The successful candidate is eligible to receive an additional travel and related expenses grant during the course of the project courtesy of The University Library worth up to **£2,000** per year for 4 years, or pro rata for part-time students.

The project can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis.

If you are an international student, please be aware that there may be additional fees (e.g. UK student visa, Immigration Health Surcharge; more details here: [Cost of studying in the UK | Study UK](#)); for all enquiries contact the PG administrator (details at the end of document).

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) on top of your studentship. DSA helps to cover the cost of any additional support that a person studying for a

doctorate might need as a result of a disability, mental health problem or specific learning difficulty. You can read more about DSA: <https://www.ukri.org/publications/disabled-students-allowance-dsa-framework/>.

## Eligibility

This studentship is open to both Home and International applicants.

To be classed as a home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements),
- or Have settled status,
- or Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements),
- or Have indefinite leave to remain or enter.

Further guidance can be found here based on revisions to Training Grant Terms and Conditions for projects starting in October 2025 - [Policy statement: review of the training grant conditions – UKRI](#)

We want to encourage the widest range of potential students to study for a CDP studentship and are committed to welcoming students from different backgrounds. We particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian, and other Ethnically Diverse backgrounds as they are currently underrepresented at this level in this area.

Applicants for this PhD studentship are expected to have previous training at master's level in a relevant field such as history of science, environmental studies, geography, archaeology, or museum and heritage studies, with a first-class/distinction result (or non-UK equivalent) and significant experience in historical research; or to have equivalent relevant experience. Equivalent experience might include but is not restricted to: a strong track record of employment in a library, museum, or heritage institution, that includes responsibility for relevant archival research, collections curation, and/or public engagement activity. Applicants will only be considered if they have an exceptionally strong background for this research and a well-conceived response to the project overview. To demonstrate this, applicants will be required to write a letter of 700 words outlining how your interests, skills and experience equip you to develop a project on the history of the discovery of long-term environmental change and interpretation of place in the East of England.

As a collaborative award, students will be expected to spend time at both the Department of History and Philosophy of Science and the University Library, Whipple and Sedgwick museums.

NB. All applicants must meet UKRI terms and conditions for funding. See: <https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>.

We ask all applicants to complete a voluntary EDI monitoring form [here](#). All responses are anonymous.

## Application Process

All applications will need to be made through the University Graduate Application Portal: <https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/apply>

A step-by-step guide, including for the Application Portal is at the end of this document. This includes an indication of the key skills and experiences required for the project. An online information session will be held on Tuesday 22 April at 4pm (BST). This is an opportunity to hear more about the project and the application process. Following a presentation, there will be the chance to ask questions. Please register in advance to attend or receive the recording: [Register your interest.](#)

Please let us know if you require any adjustments for the application process or interview. Support or adjustments may include, but are not limited to:

- Opportunity to speak with project supervisors at HEI and CDP Award Holder about the project and the process.
- Opportunity to speak with contacts within the HEI and/or CDP Award Holder regarding institutional support systems (e.g. neurodiversity, racial diversity and LGBTQIA+ networks, mental health support, support for carers).
- Access to interview questions and an insight into the interview process (e.g. selection criteria used).
- Opportunity to visit the relevant building and room prior to interview, as well as on-site guidance (demonstrating accessible routes and/or familiarity with building layouts for example)
- Opportunity to speak with active CDP students to ask questions regarding student experience as part of the CDP scheme.

Your application will not be adversely affected by disclosing a disability, and it will be processed in exactly the same way as any other application.

For guidance, information and support for prospective students, applicants and current students with any impairment/disability or health condition, please visit <https://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/>.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online interview with the supervisory team and representative from the CC-EE CDP consortium on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> or Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June.

## Informal Enquiries and Contacts

Applicants are encouraged to contact the supervisory team with informal enquiries about the studentship:

- Professor Richard Staley, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge – [raws1@cam.ac.uk](mailto:raws1@cam.ac.uk)
- Dr Katrina Dean, Cambridge University Library – [kjd32@cam.ac.uk](mailto:kjd32@cam.ac.uk)

Please contact the PhD administrator if you have any questions or concerns about the application or interview process:

- PhD Administrator, David Thompson – [dt243@cam.ac.uk](mailto:dt243@cam.ac.uk)
- If you would like to speak with active CDP students to ask questions regarding student experience as part of the CDP scheme, please contact Sarah Villis at [cc-ee@fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](mailto:cc-ee@fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)



## Guide to using the Application Portal

1. Register for an account or log in to the [Applicant Portal](#).
2. Search for **PhD in History and Philosophy of Science** and apply now (by the application deadline of 16 May 2025).
3. Choose a course start date of 01-Oct-2025.
4. First section: **About you**
  - a. Personal Details
  - b. Contact Details
  - c. Nationality & Visa: If you are resident of outside of the UK, please put all your relevant information about your Visa status, more information for International students can be found [here](#)
  - d. Additional information: the information put here is not used in the academic decision to admit you to the course.
  - e. College Membership: all students are assigned a college once they are accepted on a course; it's a good idea to select a preference in your application rather than leaving this blank. When choosing a College, you can have a look at what disciplines are covered by the Fellows of the College and where your proposed Supervisors is based, for example. You can find out more about choosing a college here. <https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges>
  - f. This is where you add your academic history details and supporting transcripts. If you do not have a Master's degree, please add all relevant work experience in the employment history and CV section.
5. Second Section: **Course Application**
  - a. Reference Request, add details of 2 references.
  - b. Employment history: add all employment history relevant to this studentship.
  - c. English Language: if you are not a national of an English-speaking country you will be asked to provide scores of a recently taken language test or indicate that you are planning to book an approved language test. If you have not taken a test yet, you will only need to provide the scores if you are offered a place.
  - d. Research (**Important please add to fields as described below**)
    - i. Please say 'Yes' to 'Do you have any research information to add?'
    - ii. 'Proposed Title' please add: **CDP Studentship: The history and heritage of the discovery of environmental change and the interpretation of place in the East of England.**
    - iii. 'Summary of proposed research project' please add: **CDP Studentship: Department of History and Philosophy of Science & University Library**
    - iv. 'Name of proposed supervisor' please add: **Professor Richard Staley**
    - v. 'Research experience' please add: **All your relevant research experience.**
  - e. Other Information, add your CV and career goals into this section.
  - f. Course Specific Questions
    - i. Sample of Work: Applicants should provide a sample of written work in English. This is usually a thesis or one or two long essays. There is no set minimum or maximum word count for the writing sample(s), we simply recommend that students select one or two pieces of work that best represent their writing style. It is sensible (but not obligatory) to choose a piece of work which is at least roughly in the subject area in which you plan

- to do research. These could include research articles, or sector- or public-facing outputs, including blogs.
- ii. Research Proposal: In this section, and using the project overview above as your starting point, please write a letter of 700 words outlining how your interests, skills and experience equip you to develop a project on the history of the discovery of long-term environmental change and interpretation of place in the East of England. The letter will be used as a basis for interview.
6. Third Section: **Funding your study** (Important. Please add to fields as described below)
- a. The portal states that applications are closed (don't worry about this as this studentship is fully funded)
  - b. Have you applied for or secured funding for this course – please answer **yes**.
    - i. Funding: select **Other**
    - ii. Funding status: select **I have applied for this funding**
    - iii. Please give details about this funding: please add **AHRC CDP Studentship**
    - iv. Please ignore the other fields.
7. Fourth Section: Equal Opportunities
- a. Widening Access and Participation: Information collected in this section will be used for anonymous statistical reporting.
  - b. Adjustments: If you would like to tell us about any adjustments you may need to help enable us to treat you fairly, please let us know here (e.g. if you are a wheelchair user). [The Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre \(ADRC\)](#) offers guidance, information and support to prospective students, applicants and current students with any impairment/disability or health condition.
8. Fifth Section: Summary
- i. Supporting Documents
  - ii. Academic Transcripts
  - iii. CV
  - iv. Sample of Work
  - v. Letter outlining how your interests, skills and experience equip you to develop a project on the topic outlined in the project overview as described above.
- b. Funding Applications: please ignore this (this PhD is fully funded)
  - c. Pay and submit: there is no fee for this application.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the supervisory team with informal enquiries about the studentship:

*Please contact the PhD administrator if you have any questions or concerns about the application or interview process:*

- *PhD Administrator, David Thompson – [dt243@cam.ac.uk](mailto:dt243@cam.ac.uk)*



