**Sustainable Transitions – Leverhulme Doctoral Training Programme Guidance for Masters plus PhD Applicants - 2025 Entry**

# Introduction

The Sustainable Transitions – Governance, Ecological Management and Society Leverhulme Doctoral Training Programme is funding 18 doctoral scholars with intakes in the years of 2024, 2025 and 2026. The programme includes three Masters plus PhD scholarships for students from underrepresented groups.

The Masters Plus PhD Scholarships are available for Home fee status students who identify as being from underrepresented groups that meet the following criteria:

* Not already have a Master’s degree
* Be from a low-income household background as evidenced by, for example, being in receipt of a full maintenance loan or Special Support loan during their undergraduate studies

and/or

Be one of the following categories of ethnicity:

* Black African
* Black Caribbean
* Black Other
* Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
* Mixed – White and Black African
* Other mixed background (including Black African, Black Caribbean and Black Other)

**Structure**

The structure of the Masters Plus PhD programme includes the standard 1 + 3 model of taught masters (180 credits) for Year One, followed by the standard three-year PhD course.

**Year 1**

In Year One, Students will take a Master’s degree related to their field/area of study and/or related to relevant research methods and skills.

**Progression requirement**

It is a requirement that students on the programme achieve a merit for their Master’s Degree in Year 1 to be able to proceed to Year 2 of the programme / the PhD phase.

**Years 2, 3 & 4**

Once a student has progressed onto the PhD, they will be required to meet the PhD milestone requirements. Students must satisfy the milestones each year to continue with their progression through the programme.

**Features of the Sustainable Transitions Programme**

Doctoral students under the programme will become independent and creative researchers who will contribute to our theoretical and empirical understanding in crucial areas relating to environmental sustainability. They will develop a breadth of knowledge across the ‘sustainability’ landscape with the skills to communicate effectively to diverse audiences, making connections between different disciplines. They will be trained in different types of interdisciplinary research methodologies, in order that our understanding of what is needed for ‘sustainable transitions’ to take place, can be properly developed and put into practice.

The core purpose of all research projects under the programme will be first, to clearly understand the systemic change that would be required for the sustainable transition to take place, and second, to understand what processes or systems would be needed to make that change occur. This means that the research can have the potential to challenge existing assumptions and practices at governmental and societal levels, as well as those in business and industry. It will also mean that research under the programme will have the potential for lasting policy and societal impact.

The University of Essex has numerous centres and institutes that operate in the field of environmental sustainability. The [Centre for Environment and Society](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/environment-and-society) (CES) acts as a hub for researchers across the University, bringing together centres and institututes that work on environmental and sustainability related projects. Some have a strong focus on sustainable development itself such as the [Centre for Accountability and Global Development](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/accountability-and-global-development), the [Centre for Global South Studies](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/global-south-studies#:~:text=The%20Centre%20for%20Global%20South,connections%20to%20the%20Global%20North.), and the [Centre for Economic Sociology and Innovation](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/economic-sociology-and-innovation), some are more focused on economics and rights such as the [Institute for Social and Economic Research](https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/) and the [Human Rights Centre](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/human-rights), and some have a greater focus on scientific data analysis, such as the [Essex Plant Innovation Centre](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/essex-plant-innovation), the [Centre for Computational Finance and Economic Agents](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/computational-finance-and-economic-agents) and the [Institute for Analytics and Data Science](https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/institute-for-analytics-and-data-science) or the Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis. What all of these centres and institutes have in common is the role that their work plays in contributing to the development of knowledge and understanding at Essex that furthers progress in the transition to environmental sustainability.

# Supervisor Led Projects

Supervisor-led project areas have been specified (as advertised). Each project area has been developed by the supervisory teams from the participating departments in conjunction with the Director of the Programme and the Management Team. The project areas leave sufficient flexibility for applicants to develop their own research proposal in terms of questions/objectives, approaches and methodologies. Successful applicants will further develop their proposals in close consultation with their supervisors.

# Supervision

When the student progresses from their Master’s degree to the PhD, they will then come under the regular supervision of the supervisory team.

Within this programme, the primary discipline supervisor takes the lead responsibility for supervising the project.

In terms of content, where there are two supervisors, the primary discipline supervisor would be responsible for approximately 70% of the project content supervision and the secondary discipline supervisor for approximately 30% of the project content supervision.

Where there are three supervisors there may be variations on the above model, but this will be subject to pedagogical constraints to ensure that PhD level research is attained.

This apportionment of content and supervision enables the candidate to build their expertise to PhD standard, whilst achieving interdisciplinarity and the incorporation of interdisciplinary research methods.

The primary discipline supervisor will maintain supervision throughout the project to ensure coherence.

The twice-yearly departmental review of the candidate’s work and progress is undertaken by the department of the primary discipline supervisor.

# Scholarship Funding details, eligibility criteria and requirements

Refer to the Terms and Conditions.

# Proficio Funding

In addition to the research funds that scholarship students under the programme are entitle to, all PhD students are entitled to the University of Essex [Proficio](https://www.essex.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/proficio) funding of £2,500 (in total) which can be used for training, development and conference attendance

# Home / International Applicants

# These Masters plus PhD scholarships are only available for Home fee status applicants in accordance with the terms of the Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarship Programme.

See fee status information here: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/money/fee-status-enquiries> .

# Location

# Scholarships are for on campus study only (NOT for online or distance learning).

# ****How to Apply:****

You should apply separately for the Masters plus PhD scholarship and the PhD course applicable to the project that you are applying for.

**To apply for the Masters Plus PhD scholarship**: please complete the scholarship application form and email it to [SustainableLDTP@essex.ac.uk](mailto:SustainableLDTP@essex.ac.uk) by **11:59pm on Friday 18th April 2025** and attach a 3 page (max) curriculum vitae including educational and academic /professional / working experience

**To apply for the PhD:** please complete the online course application which is quick and straightforward. The following pages give all the details: https://www.essex.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/applying-to-essex

NB. On the PhD application form on the ‘Course’ page, there is a section entitled*, ‘Proposed research topic or area of research* \*’ - In the adjacent box please note that you are applying for a ‘Sustainable Transitions’ scholarship and provide the title of the project and that you are applying for a Masters plus PhD scholarship.

On the same Course Page there is a section that states ‘I*f you have contacted a potential supervisor to discuss your application or research proposal, please provide the person's full name.*’ - In the adjacent box please state the name of the primary discipline supervisor for the project.

You should apply for a place to study by **11:59pm GMT on Friday 18th April 2025**

# **Guidance on the Content of the Sustainable Transitions Leverhulme Doctoral Training Programme Application**

1. **Research proposal (Max 1000 words excluding references. NB Your research proposal on the PhD application form can be the same)**

The proposal should respond to the specific ‘Sustainable Transitions’ research project that you are applying to undertake and should include:

**Background literature**: Details, including specific examples of literature that is relevant to the area that you intend to study. This can include official documents and reports if appropriate.

**Aims and Objectives:** A breakdown of the main research aims and objectives, or component elements of the project as you envisage it and why the area of research is particularly important.

**Research methods**: A brief discussion (two or three sentences) to highlight the type of research that you would anticipate undertaking for your research project. For example this can refer to desk-based research, field-based research, lab-based research and so on. (It is recognised that many applicants will not have advanced knowledge of research methods at the time of application. Training will be provided to the successful applicants.)

**Master’s Degree:** Please indicate which master’s degree at the University you would undertake in the first phase of the programme.

**List of references:** Provide a list of references using an appropriate referencing style (e.g., Harvard / APA) (no more than 10 references/sources)

1. **Personal Statement (Max 500 words)**

In the personal statement you should provide background information related to your education, training, work / professional experience (research/practice based) and any other information which demonstrates that you have the background, experience, preparedness, and knowledge appropriate for the research project that you are applying to undertake. You can also provide a brief statement of your career or future aspirations.

1. **Curriculum vitae (CV – 3 pages maximum)**

Please use 11 point type.

1. **Referees**

Two references are required. One of which should be an academic referee.

# Information Considered by the Assessors

The panel of assessors will only consider the documentation and information requested. They will disregard any other documentation that is not requested as part of the application process.

# General Information

**More general information on postgraduate research at the University of Essex can be found here:** <https://www.essex.ac.uk/postgraduate/research>

# **Interviews / Shortlisting and Results**

**Applicants shortlisted for interview will be informed by 30th April 2025..**

**Two rounds of interviews will take place between 9th and 25th June. .**

**Outcomes for interviewed applicants (i.e. offer, place on waiting list, unsuccessful application) will be made by 7th July 2025.**

**Applying for the Master’s Degree**

**It is not necessary at this stage for applicants to apply for the Master’s Degree. Successful applicants will be invited to apply for the relevant Master’s degree when notified of their scholarship offer.**

# Guidance Webinar for Applicants

On 17th March 2025 between 12-2pm (GMT) a webinar will take place during which further guidance will be provided. This will also provide the opportunity for applicants to ask questions about the programme and the University.

**Registration for the Webinar: TBA**

# **Further Enquiries**

**Please contact Ms Kate Davis the Programme Administrator (Email:** SustainableLDTP@essex.ac.uk**) if you need further general information.**

**If you have enquiries related to specific advertised projects, please send an email to the primary discipline supervisor.**