Doctoral Landscape Awards Fundin Application Form

Application Details

Please note that this DLA Funding Application must be completed fully, and submitted in addition to:

- Two References (using the Doctoral Landscape Award Reference Request Form only)
- Copies of Higher Education Qualifications (certificates and transcripts)
- International applicants must also provide a valid English language qualification

Please ensure that you have allowed yourself enough time to complete the Doctoral Landscape Award Application in full. **This Doctoral Landscape Award Application Form will need to be uploaded to a Birmingham City University online application form for your chosen research degree** and submitted alongside the other documents listed above.

You must submit your Birmingham City University online application form alongside all required supporting documentation before the deadline of 27th January 2026 (Noon, UK Time).

Incomplete applications, or applications received after this deadline, will not be considered under any circumstances.

Please consult the Applicant Guidance Notes when completing this form.

Applicant Details

Full Name:	Applicant Three
Email Address	applicantthree@outlook.co.uk

Eligibility

Please check the following to confirm your eligibility for the Doctoral Landscape Awards

I am not currently enrolled as a doctoral student	☒
I am not already in receipt of a doctoral level qualification	☒

Fee Status

The AHRC Doctoral Landscape Awards are administered and awarded under the regulations set out in UKRI's terms and conditions surrounding recruitment. Due to funder restrictions, only one award each year can be offered to an international candidate.

Please see the DLA Applicant Guidance Notes for further information on determining Fee Status.

Please indicate whether you meet the criteria for Home/UK fee status or International/Overseas fee status
Home/UK Candidate

Employment Status

AHRC eligibility criteria stipulates that candidates cannot take up a full-time funding award and continue in full-time employment.

If studying full-time, employment should not exceed six hours in any week or (for international students) the maximum as laid down in your visa. If studying part-time, employment should not exceed 20 hours in any week.

Please indicate which mode of study you intend to adopt if you are successful with your funding application
Full-Time

If you intend to engage with part-time employment whilst undertaking a funding award, please specify an indicative number of hours of employment per week
None

That's Me! Studentship

A key focus of the Doctoral Landscape Awards is **equality, diversity and inclusion**. We are committed to attracting talented students from a wide range of backgrounds and providing the support they need to thrive throughout their PhD journey. **As part of this commitment, at least one of BCU's six studentships each year will be awarded to a UK/home fee status candidate from a Global Majority background.** This dedicated award continues the legacy of BCU's *That's Me!* project, which addresses barriers to postgraduate research study and promotes widening participation in doctoral research across the West Midlands. It will provide access to bespoke mentoring from senior Global Majority staff and professional development opportunities.

Please indicate if you would like to be considered for the That's Me! Studentship
No

Your Proposed Project

Please consult the Applicant Guidance Notes when completing this section of the form as it includes helpful information, tips, and prompts to support you.

Please provide a project title for your proposed research
Metal that Talks Back: Finding the Body in Blacksmithing

Please confirm which overarching subject area your proposed research aligns with
Art & Design

Project Proposal (max. 500 words)

Please outline as relevant to the stage of your research at the time of applying, and with reference (e.g., Jones, 2017) to existing literature in the field:

- The context of your project (i.e., the research or practice background to the problem/challenge/research gap you will investigate).
- The research question(s) it will answer.
- The method(s) you will use to investigate your research question(s).
- The impact(s) your project could make in terms of an original contribution to knowledge in the field(s), and beyond academia (e.g., in professional and creative practice, industry, etc).

As Blacksmiths, we talk about forging as an equal conversation with metal, and use tactile, bodily language like ‘cheeks,’ ‘swell,’ and ‘squish,’ to describe its “flesh-like” responsiveness (Lind Jenson, 2023). However, there is almost no formal scholarship in Blacksmithing so this dialogue and ‘squish’ is taken for granted within the field, but has never been considered in the wider context of research into embodied making practices.

This squishy, empathetic description is in stark contrast to the popular image of metalworking as rigid, industrial and hypermasculine (Crowson and Done, 2017, Begiato, 2020). Frank’s (2022) survey of Queer Metalsmiths questions this stereotype and highlights a rich, unexplored embodiment as forging requires “the full attention of one’s entire body.”

This PhD expands on these beginnings to uncover the materiality of Blacksmithing and apply it to discourses in Queer Theory and New Materialism questioning hierarchies between human and non-human materials (Salamon, 2010; Cohen, 2022). As the body is recognised as fleshy material, boundaries of personhood and identity are interrupted (Kristeva, 1982; Butler, 1993). Puar (2017) and Chen (2012) likewise humanise objects to question hierarchies between different kinds of bodies.

This material/body question strongly reflects my own experience of working with metal. Forging appears to allow body and metal to converse through a shared sensory language. Hammer blows harden and heat relaxes metal's internal structures. (Untracht, 1975) Changing tensions are felt as vibrations reverberating back through the maker's entire body, their muscles similarly relaxing and contracting in response.

Deleuze (2003) defines the body as a constellation of organs which open and close to capture collisions between sensations. This PhD suggests that this mechanism of capturing sensations is present in both body and metal and examines how such overlapping sensing lives position dissimilar materials as bodies in conversation.

This PhD will assert that Blacksmithing as sensory conversation is a novel approach to flattening the hierarchy between human and non-human bodies, and devise methods for applying this approach to research practices.

Research Question: Using a Queer lens, to what extent can Blacksmithing be conceptualised as a dialogue between bodies and materials, and in doing so reconfigure relations between the human and non-human?
Aims:
Establish fundamental understanding of Blacksmithing as embodied practice.
Devise methods for working through a material language of the forge.
Interpret New Materialist discourses through dialogue with material.

This research uses an iterative, practice-based method of "reflection-in-the-making-moment" (Candy, 2021) to intertwine textual and material thinking. A circular practice of drawing, forging and writing will generate insights which are fed back in, further tested and interpreted. Interviews will invite other Blacksmiths' experiences, and reflection on the natural response of metal will record the material's input during making (Baio and Solomon, 2021) to develop practices of conversing through sensory interaction.

The output will be a thesis presented in and alongside material practice through exhibition,(Harrington, 2015; Masding, 2024; Dormer, 2025) generating knowledge specific to the intersection of Blacksmithing and Queer New Materialism, and forging new languages of practice that foreground the materiality of metal and body.

Project Reference List (max. 200 words)

Please provide references for all primary and secondary material cited in your project proposal. These references may include full details of exhibitions, performances, and other examples of practice. You should ONLY include references for material you have discussed in the project proposal. Your references should provide enough information to locate the item.

BEGIATO, J. (2020) *Brawn and bravery*. in BEGIATO, J. (2020) *Manliness in Britain, 1760 - 1900*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

BAIO, C. and SOLOMON, L. (2021) *Thinking together through practice and research.* in VEAR, C. (ed.) (2021) *The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research.* Abingdon: Routledge.
BUTLER, J. (1993) *Bodies that Matter*. Hove: Psychology Press.
CANDY, L. (2021) *Reflective practice variants and the creative practitioner.* in VEAR, C. (ed.) (2021) *The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research.* Abingdon: Routledge.
CHEN, M.Y. (2012) *Animacies*. Durham: Duke University Press
COHEN, J. (2022) *Queering the Inorganic.* in LETTOW, S. & NESSEL, S. (eds.) (2022.) *Ecologies of Gender.* London: Routledge.
CROWSON, S.J. and DONE, D. (2017) *Forge*. Coleraine:Impact Print
DELEUZE, G. (2003) *Francis Bacon*. Translated by Daniel W. Smith. London: Continuum.
DORMER, C. (2025) *Ecosystems of Feminism(s)*. Parse, 20.
KRISTEVA, J. (1982) *Powers of Horror.* Translated by LEON S.R. New York City: Columbia University Press.
LIND JENSON, J. (2023) *Searching for the Essence of the Material.* The Vessel, 5. Available at: Jokum Lind Jensen| The Vessel [Accessed 12 November 2025]
FRANK, R. (2022) *Queer + Metals.* Available at: Queer + Metals [Accessed 12 November 2025]
HARRINGTON, J. (2015). *Process made visible.* Doctoral, Sheffield Hallam University (United Kingdom).. [Thesis]
MASDING, J. (2024) *Body of Pieces.* S.l.: Bobo Books.
PUAR, J.K. (2017) *The Right to Maim*. Durham: Duke University Press.
SALAMON, G. (2010) *Assuming a body.* New York: Columbia University Press.
UNTRACHT, O. (1975) *Metal Techniques for Craftsmen.* New York: Doubleday

An Indicative Structure/Timeline (max. 200 words)

We are looking to see that you understand the feasibility of your research and have the potential to project manage your PhD. Please provide an indicative structure/timeline for your project across the duration of the award you are applying for.

Click or tap here to enter text.
Year 1 –
PG Cert in research practice - practice-based methodologies and ethical framework
Ethical approval for interviews with Blacksmiths and archive visits
Literature review - contextual frame for human/non-human material hierarchies
Drawing, writing, forging reflections on bodies and metal
Record reflections on embodied experience of practice
Visit Hereford College of Arts library, collate existing written material on metal's materiality
Write contextual chapters:
Chapter 1- Literature Review: The Material Body
Chapter 2- Embodiment and Materiality in Blacksmithing
Year 2 –

Larger scale material experiments through artist residency
Refine reflective practice of conversing with material
Interview Blacksmiths on embodied experience of forge
Present preliminary findings through knowledge exchange at British Artist Blacksmith Association AGM and remotely through international publications/ Society for Inclusive Blacksmiths network, survey responses
Write Methodology chapters:
Chapter 3- Findings from Iterative Research, Methods of Forging in Conversation
Chapter 4 - Approaching the Body through Material Language
Year 3 -
Synthesise findings into insights on material hierarchies
Apply insights back to material practice, develop into body of work for exhibition
Present preliminary conclusions at conferences, facilitate creative conversations between blacksmiths and researchers
Complete contribution/conclusion chapters
Chapter 5 - Blacksmithing as research practice
Year 3.5 -
Refine and submit thesis
Viva/ Exhibition

Ethics (max. 200 words)

All research projects must comply with relevant research ethics and integrity guidelines. You must address ethical issues early in your research. Please review BCU's guidelines and outline:

- The specific ethical considerations of your project: these may be material (e.g. copyright and intellectual property, data storage) or methodological (data collection, engagement of research participants/stakeholders); and
- How you will address ethical concerns you have identified (e.g., informed consent, anonymisation, appropriate training, identification of support services etc.)

My research will adhere to BCU's Code of Practice and Ethics, including its guidance of the use of AI.

Interviews with Blacksmiths will conform to ethical approval and GDPR guidelines. Interview questions and creative conversations will be developed with sensitivity to the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of all involved. All transcripts will be returned to participants for their approval before use, and submissions will be anonymised where appropriate.

I will operate within safe working procedures in the forge, and when making visits to workshops to conduct interviews or attend knowledge exchange events, to ensure the safety of both myself and participants. This will include appropriate use of PPE when working with hot and heavy tools and materials.

I will also approach the practical aspects of my research with an awareness of the potentially toxic and environmentally harmful chemicals and emissions involved in the processes of metalwork.

Off-Site Practice/Fieldwork/Study Visits (max. 200 words)

Complete this section if your proposed project will require you to undertake fieldwork, study visits or practice (beyond routine dissemination and engagement events). We are not looking for numerical figures but the types of costs that are likely to be incurred. For each activity, please provide indicative details about:

- Where the activity will take place (i.e., country, institute, archive, centre etc)
- How long the activity will take (i.e., days, weeks)
- Why the activity is required (i.e., how will the activity support you to complete your research? e.g., enable data collection, stakeholder engagement, language practice, test theoretical argument etc.)
- What types of costs are likely to be incurred (travel, accommodation, room hire, training costs)
- Contingency plans in the event that activity cannot go ahead due to risk assessment outcomes (e.g., restrictions due to COVID-19).

Please be aware, this application will serve as a reference point for additional funding. Activities identified here must be essential to the completion of your project. Their significance to the project must be evident to the assessors of your application. Activities not mentioned here but which are later identified as important to your research will be scrutinised.

Study Visits
Visit Hereford College of Arts Library to search British Artist Blacksmith Association magazine archive, technical manuals and dissertation archive for writing on metallurgy, 'squish' and forging practice.
Contingency: More recent British Artist Blacksmith Association magazines are available in digital format through subscription and loans of books could be requested via BCU libraries.

Fieldwork
Interviews with Blacksmiths, knowledge exchange and interim presentations will sometimes take place in others' workshops during community gatherings known as 'forge ins,' or larger meetings of the British Artist Blacksmith Association.
Activity may also be undertaken remotely through video calls or disseminating surveys.

International Fieldwork/potential professional placement
Visiting Artist Residency in Sweden at Gothenburg University's HDK - Valand Metal Arts Campus. I have been invited to make use of the industrial workshops there to facilitate larger-scale material experiments and collaborate with students and practising Blacksmiths. This will also foster links between emerging smiths and research practice

through artist in residence talks. Costs include travel to Sweden and accommodation through the University, materials and shipping. Contingency: Arrange to undertake larger scale work domestically at community workshop Hereford Make CIC or through collaboration with Hereford College of Arts, costs would include workshop fees, materials and travel.

Preparedness

If applicable, please provide details about your higher education qualifications.

In order to support our inclusive approach to applications, please DO NOT include details of your degree-awarding institution in your answers.

Please indicate if your qualification was awarded in the UK or internationally. If internationally, please indicate the UK equivalency of the qualification and its classification. If you are unsure of the UK equivalencies of your qualifications, please contact the Research Admissions Team and Doctoral Landscape Awards Team at Birmingham City University on: Research.Admissions@bcu.ac.uk and DLA@bcu.ac.uk.

Undergraduate Degree

Subject	Artist Blacksmithing
Degree	BA (Hons)
Classification	First Class
Completion Date	2022
Awarding Country	United Kingdom

Postgraduate Degree (Master's or Equivalent International Qualification)

If you are not studying for/do not hold a Master's Degree, but have equivalent professional experience, please proceed to the next questions and provide details there.

If you are currently studying for a Master's Degree, please put 'pending' under 'classification', and the date when you expect to finish under completion. If you are in this position, please be aware that completing your postgraduate degree will be a condition of any award.

Subject	Click or tap here to enter text.
Degree	Click or tap here to enter text.
Classification	Click or tap here to enter text.
Completion Date	Click or tap to enter a date.
Awarding Country	Click or tap here to enter text.

Previous Study and Experience (max. 500 words)

Describe how you are ready to undertake your proposed doctoral research project based on your previous study and experience. You might comment on:

- **Knowledge and skills** developed through previous study (e.g., undergraduate/postgraduate studies (including specific modules), certifications, training etc.) and/or **professional and creative practice** (e.g., employment, research assistantships, consultancy, residencies, performances, curations, internships etc.).

- **Specialised training** (e.g., languages, ICT, methods, EDI etc.).

- **Academic and professional achievements** (e.g., awards, scholarships, publications etc.).

If appropriate, you should also identify any training you might need to undertake or skills you might need to gain in order to complete your project. These may include:

- **Language** proficiency
- **Research methods** in data collection, such as interviewing, archive use, and associated ethical
- practice
- **Data management and processing,** particularly where specific software is required
- **Project management,** including practice and curation

If you wish to be considered for the That's Me Studentship, you may also use this space to reflect briefly on any aspects of your background, experience, or route into doctoral study that you feel are relevant. This could include how the additional mentoring and professional development offered through the studentship might support your growth as a researcher. This is entirely optional and will not affect how your application is scored.

This practice-based research relies on my embodied experience in Blacksmithing. Since graduating, I have worked internationally with master Metalsmiths with both traditional and artistic practices, gaining technical expertise, knowledge of the breadth of the field, and an intuitive sensed relationship to metal.

I have been awarded scholarships to well regarded Metalsmithing institutions. I received the Stefan Kafarkis scholarship to the US Centre for Metal Arts, and bursaries from Southsquare Trust and the British Allied Trades Federation to undertake a year's postgraduate residency at Bishopsland Educational Trust, where I am currently taking a series of masterclasses alongside developing my own practice. My ongoing practice is also supported by the Heritage Crafts Foundation.

These awards reflect a deep understanding of my medium as well as close engagement with the field and my regard and backing within it. With very little recorded analysis of Blacksmithing, my knowledge of the way the artform is informally characterised, and contact with other makers will be vital. Additional training in interview methods through this PhD will help me make the best use of these connections.

During the two years of my Artist's Residency at BCU's School of Jewellery, I consistently engaged with the University's research community. I was invited to provide expertise on Blacksmithing processes and the tacit knowledge they embody to researchers with the Baskerville Small Performances project, presented research at the Culture Costume and Design Conference 2023, and was invited to attend presentations by members of the Material Matters research cluster. Outside of BCU, I was approached by researchers with the University of Vienna to take part in a project examining reflection during making, giving me great insight into this process as research method. Repeated invitations to such projects and ongoing relationships with their members demonstrate my ability to collaborate and make meaningful contributions to research at a postgraduate level.

I am considered an important voice in Blacksmithing's emergent conceptual field and have been invited to speak at a majority of the community's most important recent international events. I was on an international panel for the {Queer + Metals} project at the Ferrous Festival 2022, and in 2024 assisted in curation and gave a talk for the Society for Inclusive Blacksmiths exhibition. In October I was invited to the University of Gothenburg's HDK Valand Metal Arts campus to deliver a lecture on the subject of this PhD to postgraduate students and researchers with the Iron Notes conference. I have since been invited to undertake a residency at HDK Valand, and to present a follow up lecture to Hereford College of Art's Blacksmithing MA Students elaborating on practice-based methodologies.

Events and projects like Iron Notes and {Queer + Metals} demonstrate the current movement within Blacksmithing towards a contemporary studio practice which is not yet recognised outside of the field. I am already acting as a bridge through the space I have created as a Blacksmith within material research communities, making me uniquely positioned to undertake this research and expand this momentum into a scholarly field for Blacksmithing.

Any Other Information (max. 150 words)

Is there any other information you would like to bring to the panel's attention? For instance, you might wish to note extenuating circumstances, such as illness, which have affected your previous performance.

If there is something you would like the panel to know, **please present it as concisely as possible**, with a rough date. For instance, "2021, diagnosis of dyslexia during final year of study. Mitigation as the result of diagnosis improved but degree average predominantly calculated on previous grades"

Click or tap here to enter text.

Place

Proposed Supervisory Team

Please provide details of your potential supervision team. Include here the names of your potential supervisors and their universities in each case (minimum of 2 and no more than 3 academic supervisors).

Potential Lead Supervisor Details:

Name	Sian Hindle
University	Birmingham City University
Academic Unit	Fashion and Jewellery

Potential Second Supervisor Details:

Name	Nuala Clooney
University	Birmingham City University
Academic Unit	Fashion and Jewellery

Potential Third Supervisor (optional):

Name	Lisa Metherell
University	Birmingham City University
Academic Unit	Art and Design

Place of Study (max. 300 words)

Describe how BCU and any other selected institution(s) provide a suitable environment for both the progress of your project and your academic/professional development. Please comment on:

- The fit and expertise of your proposed **supervisory team.**
- Institutional **expertise and networks** (e.g., research centres/institutes/groups, partnerships, collaborations etc)
- **Training and development** opportunities (e.g., available courses, teaching, leadership roles).

As my DoS, Hindle's extensive experience supervising practice-based research and her use of drawing as reflective process will be vital to shaping a cohesive methodological approach. Her work placing identity at the boundary between self and object will help site my research in its theoretical context.

Hindle's involvement in wider research communities will also provide me with connections and an understanding of the field which will support me in a research career beyond the timeline of this PhD. A first year PG Cert in Research Methods will also aid my professional development.

Clooney's expertise in relational and tactile ways of knowing will be crucial to helping me develop my understanding of sensory lives, whether bodily or material. Her playful, embodied practice will ensure that making remains central to my research.

Metherell's research in Queer Theory and phenomenology will provide an understanding of current discourses addressing the Queer body and embodied practices. Her work with marginalised identities and the limitations of language will help develop empathetic approaches to material conversations and positions at the edge of personhood.

The RAAD Material Encounters cluster will enrich my work through exploration of thinking and feeling through materials. My research will contribute to its members' work with ways of seeing from the point of view of objects.

BCU is enjoying an exciting period of innovation in metal. Birmingham Jewellery Quarter's recent award of World Craft City status and research into the production of the Baskerville type punches show clear current investment in metal and its potentialities. The metalworking facilities and forge at the School of Jewellery will be vital to this research.

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The East and West Midlands Hub

Consider how you might both support and benefit from the **East and West Midlands Hub**

You may wish to discuss these opportunities with your potential supervisor.

You may wish to comment on how you could engage with:

- Networking opportunities
- Professional development opportunities

(max. 150 words)

I am excited about the well-established presence of a practice-research community in the Hub. I intend to work alongside current PhD students exploring metalwork and body as matter and would like to spark interest in the new field of blacksmithing theory by facilitating conversations and events across the hub.

Through conferences and knowledge sharing events, makers and researchers could provide new perspectives, trouble each other's fields and perhaps develop collaborations. I also hope that my research will support connections between the Midlands' industrial heritage and its contemporary art and research institutions.

Past the timeline of this PhD, I would like to continue into a career as an artist researcher and remain affiliated with the Hub's networks, developing and sharing new interpretations of blacksmithing in history, industry and studio practice.