

# Pro:NE Studentship Scheme for 2023/24 entry

## Guidance Notes

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Postgraduate Research Opportunities for the North East/Network for Equity (Pro:NE) is an ambitious, multi-partner regional research project funded by the Office for Students. Durham University has joined together with Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities to develop a 4-year programme to mobilise and increase the number of students of colour undertaking post-graduate research in the North-East universities and to ensure that they receive the support that they need. Access and participation for students of colour is limited by persistent inequalities that exist throughout Higher Education, but is of particular prevalence in the North East which has some of the lowest numbers of students of colour in England.

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### // Available Awards

- The Pro:NE Studentship Scheme is targeted towards applications from high calibre **home students from racially minoritised ethnic background specifically**: Asian or Asian British, Black, Black British, Caribbean or African Mixed or multiple ethnic groups. Please see [here](#) for more details. This is national competition.
- There are four awards available, and one award/studentship will be available in each of the University's four Faculties: Arts and Humanities, Business School, Social Sciences and Health and Science
- All awards made by the University during this studentship competition will commence at the start of the 2023 academic year (October 2023)
- Studentships cannot normally be deferred beyond January 2024 or started before 01 October 2023.

### // Financial Support

- The Pro:NE Studentships for three years full-time provide award-holders with the following package of financial support:
  - A tax-free maintenance stipend set at the UK Research Council's national rate. The sum being £17,668.
  - Full payment of tuition fees for home students

### //Eligibility/Requirements

- Please note that on receipt of applications, the eligibility status of candidates will be assessed. If you are uncertain about whether you should submit to Pro:NE Studentship scheme or to another scheme, applicants should contact their prospective Department or School in the first instance.
- **Please note that Pro:NE candidates must not be:**
  - currently registered doctoral students
  - receiving any other studentship funding, e.g., from a national government, research council or charity
  - in full-time work during the term of the studentship if successful

- An international student or international fee-paying student
  
- **Pro:NE Studentship candidates may be:**
  - currently registered for a postgraduate taught or postgraduate research Master's at degree at Durham University or elsewhere
  
- We are looking for candidates with the following:
  - A First or 2:1 undergraduate degree, or have relevant comparable experience
  - An outstanding academic pedigree and research potential, noting this may be achieved through work experience leading to publications; and
  - A research proposal for a high-quality, manageable PhD project with potential impact in the field of their proposal. Interdisciplinary and cross-departmental proposals are encouraged.
  
- In addition, candidates will usually hold or be completing a Master's degree in their area of proposed study or related discipline.
  
- Applications are considered according to their academic merit. Factors such as your financial status and nationality are not considered.

## // Application Process

- Candidates wishing to apply for a Pro:NE Studentship scheme must complete the [University's Postgraduate Application Form](#) and submit all other supporting documentation by the date detailed in the competition timeline (Appendix 1)..
  
- When completing the postgraduate application form, candidates should state that they wish to be considered for the Pro:NE Studentship scheme award when the form asks how they intend to fund their studies.
  
- If a candidate has already submitted their online application form and not added that they wish to be considered for an award, they should contact their prospective department/school to inform them that they wish to be considered for a Pro:NE Studentship scheme.
  
- Students must meet the minimum IELTS (7.0 with no component under 6.5, or equivalent) by the deadline and potential for an 'unconditional offer' by the deadline.
  
- In addition to completing the online application form, candidates also need to provide the following documentation to their prospective department or school:
  1. Current CV (max 2 pages)
  2. A written Equality Diversity and Inclusion statement outlining why they are a suitable candidate for the Pro:NE studentship funding a project which aims to address inequalities in PGR research for racially minoritised ethnic people specifically: Asian or Asian British, Black, Black British, Caribbean or African Mixed or multiple ethnic groups. Please see [here](#) for more details.

3. Two references; one may be a Durham reference if you are a current postgraduate Masters student or graduate. The other reference must be provided by a referee who is independent of Durham University; and
  4. Transcripts of previous qualifications (s).
- The research proposal is to be included within the main application form. This should not be longer than 1,500 words in length (including footnotes but excluding bibliography / reference list). If a proposal exceeds this maximum length of 1,500 words, it will not be considered.

## **// Candidates**

- Pro:NE Studentship scheme funding is limited and competitive, following the postgraduate studentship assessment marking scheme and criteria (Appendix 2).
- Pro:NE Studentship scheme is managed for all of the Faculties through Department and Faculty Administrators. All departments/schools must collate and submit the applications received electronically to the Faculty of Science who will be administering the process (Appendix 1)
- The Pro:NE Studentship scheme Application Form (Appendix 3) must be completed by departments/schools for each applicant and the following documents attached to it (documents should be submitted as a single combined PDF):
  - a) Online University application form;
  - b) Current CV;
  - c) Two references; and
  - d) Full transcripts of qualifications obtained to date.
- Applications must be complete at the time these are submitted. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

## **// Assessment Process**

- Throughout the assessment process, all eligible candidates are assessed and graded against the postgraduate studentship assessment marking scheme and criteria outlined in Appendix 2.
- Eligible applications received by the administering Faculty of Sciences will be reviewed and assessed in the following single stage:
  - Pro:NE Postgraduate Studentships Panel meeting (Faculty Deputy Executive Deans for Research and other panel representatives (to be confirmed), who will have significant experience of doctoral supervision and postgraduate research recruitment.
- Decisions will be made using the 'Postgraduate Studentship Assessment Scheme' marking criteria as detailed in Appendix 2.

## **// Making Awards**

- Following the meeting of the University Pro:NE Studentship scheme, the administering Faculty will notify all successful and unsuccessful candidates, whilst also informing the

departments/schools of the status of their respective candidates, which includes candidates placed on the reserve list and those that have not been successful.

- Feedback will not be provided by the panel directly to students and will only be available upon request.
- Prior to the issuing of award notifications to successful candidates, an internal memorandum will be circulated to all departments/schools confirming the candidates that have been successful and those on the reserve list. If there are any specific issues and/or questions affecting candidates following the deliberations of the Studentships Panel, these will be followed-up in the run-up to the issuing of this internal memorandum and any further contact with the candidates.
- In cases where a successful candidate decides not to accept the offer of a Pro:NE Studentship scheme, the next highest-ranked candidate on the reserve list will be contacted and made an offer of an award. Where a department/school is aware that a nominated candidate has decided to withdraw from the competition it should be reported to the administering Faculty immediately to ensure such decisions are communicated and appropriate action taken.
- The decisions regarding awards and the issuing of results will take place by the date noted in Appendix 1.
- As this is an open competitive process there is no right of appeal of the outcome.
- Awards and offer letters will be processed and issued by the University's Scholarships and Student Funding Office.

## **// Further Information**

- If candidates have any questions about applying for a Pro:NE Studentship scheme, they should contact their prospective Department or School in the first instance.
- If a department or school has any questions about the Pro:NE Studentship scheme studentship process, they should contact their Faculty Office who are presiding over the administering.