**Techne Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) studentship – ‘Black British History, Inclusive Teaching, and Curriculum Reform’**

Start date: **22nd September 2025**

Application deadline: **6th January 2025 (midday)**

Interviews will take place on: **17th January 2025**

**Royal Holloway, University of London** (RHUL, a member of the Techne consortium\*), **Black Cultural Archives** (BCA), and **AQA** are delighted to announce a call for applicants for a fully funded collaborative doctoral studentship from September 2025, under the AHRC’s Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme funded by Techne.

The studentship will contribute to the fields of Black British History and Public History and the successful applicant will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in these fields in academic, heritage, and educational contexts. The project will be supervised by Dr Ayshah Johnston (BCA), Dr Matthew Smith (RHUL), and Dr Alex Windscheffel (RHUL), and supported by Katie Hall (AQA). The student will be expected to spend time at both BCA and RHUL, as well as becoming part of the wider cohort of CDA and Techne-funded students across the UK. The studentship can be undertaken on either a full or part-time basis.

We encourage the widest range of potential students to apply for this studentship and are committed to welcoming students from different backgrounds and non-standard pathways. Students should have a Masters Degree in a relevant subject or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience in a professional setting.

**Project Overview**

Six years ago, the Royal Historical Society’s *Race, Ethnicity and Equality in UK History* (2018) report highlighted the damaging consequences of racial and ethnic inequalities in the teaching of history in the UK, and how the taught curriculum for secondary schools often fails to incorporate new, diverse histories, acting as a barrier to Black and Global Majority student engagement. It is imperative, the report argued, that the curriculum be widened “to reflect the full diversity of human histories”. This need, and the call for high-quality resources to support the more inclusive teaching of history, have also been noted in the AQA *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in AQA History* (2021) report. While there has been a succession of academic and popular history books striving to mainstream Black British History (including but not limited to Fryer, 1984; Gerzina, 1995; Olusoga, 2016; Abraham and Woolf, 2022; and Adi, 2019, 2022, 2023), coverage of the experience, voice, and agency of Black citizens in all UK exam board specifications remains fragmentary and often siloed in sections looking at post-war migration and race relations.

This collaborative PhD-by-Practice in Public History project between Royal Holloway, Black Cultural Archives and AQA, aims to address this challenge by seeking answers to three timely research questions:

1. Where and how can the experience, voice and agency of Black British citizens be weaved into AQA’s and other awarding bodies’ existing GCSE and A Level specifications?
2. What new Thematic, Period or Depth Study specifications, drawing upon recent scholarship and the archival strengths of BCA, could be developed which foreground Black British History?
3. How can BCA’s archive be mobilised in the form of new digital, research-driven resources and CPD workshops for teachers to support the teaching of Black British History in existing or new specifications?

The student will examine these questions through a review of contemporary scholarship relating to Black British History and inclusive teaching practice in schools; by mapping BCA’s collection against existing exam specifications and identifying, with guidance from AQA and BCA, where interventions could be made to enhance the inclusivity of these specifications; and, based on archival research at BCA, examining what new model specifications could be developed to foreground Black British History. BCA holds one of the most comprehensive collections of twentieth century socio-political and community activism covering fields as diverse as legislation, the arts, education, and public health.

The practical outputs of this PhD by Practice will include a c.7,000-word report identifying opportunities to enhance the inclusive teaching of existing GCSE and A Level specifications, presenting new model specifications informed by the latest scholarship and archival research at BCA, and introducing research-driven resources teachers can employ in their teaching of these topics and specifications. This report will be accompanied by c.40 educational resources, including short videos, presentation slides, workbook exercises, podcasts and revision flashcards (accessible via BCA’s Learning webpages); 4 newly designed, resourced, tested and evaluated 2-hour workshops (including a delivery plan, slides, and worksheets) that BCA could deliver onsite or online; and a 40,000-word reflective and evaluative thesis.

In addition to the conventional academic supervision provided by the BCA and RHUL supervisory team (Dr Ayshah Johnston, Dr Matthew Smith, and Dr Alex Windscheffel), this studentship offers the opportunity for the successful applicant to be embedded within the Learning and Engagement team at BCA. Accordingly, the student will become part of this innovative department, working alongside archivists, community practitioners, teachers, and an existing community of postdoctoral researchers. They will also have the opportunity to contribute to BCA blogs, talks and other events.

In addition, the student will be supported by project advisor Katie Hall (Subject Lead for History and Politics at AQA). Katie has worked in the history education community for 20 years in teaching, and later examining, and is an Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association and the Schools History Project.

**Details of Award if Successful\*\***

The Techne CDA Studentship will fund a full-time studentship for 3.5 years (42 months), with an option to extend this by up to a further 6 months for placement/career enhancing activity. Students must submit their thesis within their funded period.

The award pays tuition fees up to the value of the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees. **Research Councils UK Indicative Fee Level for 2024/25 is £4,786.**

**Note for international applicants: w**here an international student is successful, RHUL will waive the difference between the home and the international fee.

The award pays full maintenance for both home and international students. **The National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2024/25 is £19,237, plus London Weighting of £2000/year, plus an additional CDA maintenance payment of £600/year to enable travel and engagement with the partner organisation.**

Further details can be found on the UKRI website <https://www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training/>

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

The successful candidate will be a Techne DTP student and will be required to attend mandatory events as part of their studentship terms and conditions with Techne. Please see the Techne website <http://www.techne.ac.uk/> for more information.

**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 - <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/UKRI-030221-Guidance-International-Eligibility-Implementation-training-grant-holders-V2.pdf>

* Applicants should ideally have or expect to receive a relevant Masters-level qualification by the time of taking up the appointment in a relevant discipline, or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience in a professional setting (potential candidates may, for instance, already be working in the heritage or education sectors).
* The project is deeply rooted in two disciplinary areas: Black British History and Public History, both of which are invested in and committed to foregrounding marginalised voices and discourses. Students with expertise or experience in either of these areas are especially encouraged to apply (this may be in an academic, professional or community context).
* Applicants with experience and knowledge (in an academic, professional or community setting) in the following areas are also particularly encouraged to apply:
	+ Experience of KS4/5 teaching or undertaking schools engagement
	+ Knowledge of the lived experiences of Black British citizens
	+ Public History
	+ Ability to communicate effectively – both verbally and in writing – with a diverse range of audiences
* The studentship offers a distinctive opportunity to undertake a collaborative doctorate with a university and a heritage institution. As such, students should demonstrate their interests and aptitude for exploiting the unique possibilities of a studentship that will allow them to develop career-enhancing skills in public history and public engagement, and to contribute to the cultural and intellectual life of both institutions.
* As part of our commitment to challenging the under-representation of Black and Global Majority students amongst doctoral researchers, we particularly welcome applications from applicants who identify as part of the Black and Global Majority racial and ethnic groups.

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/>

**How to apply**

Please include in your application:

* Your CV (traditional or narrative, see UKRI’s [Résumé for Research and Innovation](https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/develop-your-application/resume-for-research-and-innovation-r4ri-guidance/) guidance).
* An outline, 1,000 words, explaining why you are interested in researching this topic, including what you would bring to the project and how you would take it forward.
* A sample of writing (ideally this should be approximately 2,500-words, but this is flexible). This could be a piece of academic writing (e.g. part of an MA dissertation); or a text written in the course of any current or previous employment or voluntary/community work.
* Candidates invited to interview will be asked to supply a transcript of their university-level grades.
* The successful applicant will then be expected to apply formally through RHUL’s doctoral school.
* Prospective students are strongly advised to first make informal contact with Dr Matthew Smith (matthew.smith@rhul.ac.uk) and Dr Ayshah Johnston (ayshah.johnston@bcaheritage.org.uk).
* Please send your application documents to Dr Matthew Smith (matthew.smith@rhul.ac.uk) by the deadline of 6th January (midday) 2025.

**Closing date: 6th January (midday) 2025**

**Interview date: 17th January 2025**

\*The Techne consortium is comprised of Royal Holloway, University of London; Brunel University, London; Kingston University; University of Brighton; University of Roehampton; University of the Arts London; University of Surrey; University of Westminster.

\*\*The project has been shortlisted in the Techne Collaborative Doctoral Award competition and, as such, still has to progress through the final judging round of the competition. Therefore the scholarship is not yet guaranteed.