



# **The King's Foundation PhD Scholarship in Traditional Building & Vernacular Architecture** *at the University of Cambridge Department of Architecture*

## **About the Scholarship**

Applications are now open for The King's Foundation PhD Scholarship in Traditional Building & Vernacular Architecture—a fully funded Scholarship for doctoral study in the [Department of Architecture at the University of Cambridge](#).

This prestigious Scholarship offers a unique opportunity to study sustainability in traditional building practices, examining how socio-cultural and technical elements of vernacular architecture can inform and enable sustainable contemporary design.

The Scholarship recipient will join a research group working across The King's Foundation's areas of interest, and will be admitted to the PhD in Architecture in the Department of Architecture. They are expected to actively engage in the research communities at both The King's Foundation and the University of Cambridge.

## **Research Project Background**

Working within a group of researchers and practitioners at The King's Foundation, the PhD Candidate will focus on questions relating to the synthesis of socio-cultural and technical aspects of traditional and vernacular building.

Applicants should respond to the following research brief in their research proposals:

The study of vernacular and traditional architecture in the late-twentieth century had an anthropological focus, studying the reciprocal relationship between building and sense of place, community structure and culture. In the last 20+ years, focus has turned to documenting the sustainability benefits of vernacular and traditional building techniques, such as low embodied carbon in materials and design systems, their potential building physics benefits, and their ecological and human health implications.

To work with traditional buildings today, architects, planners and development professionals should synthesise these two approaches—utilising the sustainability benefits of vernacular building techniques without compromising their social and cultural functions. Few studies have acknowledged this divergence or tried to bridge it, and there is a significant research gap in how building techniques, typologies and designs combine the socio-cultural with the technical—and further in how to develop frameworks that can help designers bring them together. Study in this field is essential, given the parallel calls for people-centred, environmentally sustainable development.

The PhD Candidate will have access to The King's Foundation and its ongoing work, including international projects, traditional building techniques and international centres teaching traditional arts and building arts. They will also have access to The King's Foundation's wide range of heritage sites, urban development projects and networks of practitioners in the UK and internationally. The PhD Candidate will be supervised and advised by members of an interdisciplinary group from across The King's Foundation and the University of Cambridge based on the relevance of their expertise to the research proposed.

## Award Information

Applications are welcomed from diverse disciplinary backgrounds across the built environment, including but not limited to: architecture, landscape architecture, urbanism, planning, engineering, and architectural history. The recipient of the Scholarship will be recommended to the University of Cambridge for consideration for doctoral study, for which they will need to apply separately (and will be supported by The King's Foundation in their application).

The PhD Scholarship will cover fees at the [Home rate](#) for the PhD in Architecture (within the Department of Architecture) and provide a stipend above the [UK Research and Innovation rate](#) (a minimum of £20,780 pa) for the duration of fee liability (typically 3 years). Students with overseas status are welcome to apply but must fund the remainder of their fees from alternative sources.

The Scholarship will further include an additional provision for research expenses. Recipients will also receive mentoring and career development training, including organising and taking part in conferences and events with The King's Foundation.

Applicants must have a degree in a relevant discipline at 2:1 or higher, though candidates with non-academic experience are encouraged. Applicants will be expected to complete a PhD during the award period. Please note that selecting highly-ranked applicants for this Scholarship is a competitive process.

## How to apply

To be considered for The King's Foundation PhD Scholarship, applications must be submitted directly to The King's Foundation by **Monday 6 April 2026**. To apply, please email the below materials to "[hr.recruitment@kings-foundation.org](mailto:hr.recruitment@kings-foundation.org)", with subject line "PhD Scholarship Application – Architecture":

- Research Proposal (1000-1500 words)
- CV/Resume (3 pages maximum)
- Cover letter (2 pages maximum), including: your degree grade (as can be evidenced in your transcript); the names of two [referees willing to give you a reference](#); the title of your Sample of Work (maximum 5,000 words); and [evidence of your competence in English](#). Details of each of these will be requested at the shortlisting stage before interview.

Interviews will take place online in the week of 20 April 2026.

The successful candidate will then be supported to submit their [University of Cambridge application](#) online by Thursday 14 May 2026. Please see the [University of Cambridge Postgraduate Study Application Guide](#) for more information on what will be required on the University application form and supporting documents.

We will contact all candidates as soon as possible with the outcome of their application.

## Support and Contact

For more information on the application process or to query a potential topic, please contact Dr Wilfrid Middleton at [wilfrid.middleton@kings-foundation.org](mailto:wilfrid.middleton@kings-foundation.org) or Dr Matthew Hardy at [matthew.hardy@kings-foundation.org](mailto:matthew.hardy@kings-foundation.org).