

# **Interdisciplinary Understanding for a Changing Arctic (DurhamARCTIC) Leverhulme Doctoral Studentship Grant DS-2017-070**

## **End-of-grant summary statement regarding Durham University's commitment and legacy**

(March 2024)

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Prior to applying for the Interdisciplinary Understanding for a Changing Arctic grant, Durham University already had a long-standing commitment to Arctic research and PhD training. In any given year, the university had £1-2 million in live grants focused on Arctic research, with around 40 staff and 20 PhD students pursuing Arctic topics. Additionally, Durham was the founding English member of the University of the Arctic (UARctic) network, and staff and PhD students had been active in UARctic networking activities.

Most of the Arctic research at Durham, however, was in individual disciplines, and Arctic researchers at Durham realised that a more integrated approach was needed due to the cross-disciplinary nature of Arctic problems. To this end, the university turned to the Leverhulme Doctoral Studentship programme as an excellent opportunity for:

1. Providing high quality training for PhD students;
2. Experimenting with interdisciplinarity in postgraduate education that could be shared as best practices; and
3. Developing an interdisciplinary Arctic infrastructure that would support innovative research and training initiatives, including after Leverhulme funding had ended.

To support these objectives, Durham committed to:

- Financial support for Leverhulme students during the period of the training grant. This totalled £97,000 (including £8,000 for recruitment).
- Release time for the DurhamARCTIC Director to manage the doctoral training scheme, as well as administrative support. This totalled £267,000.
- Support for DurhamARCTIC to continue the legacy of the doctoral training programme after the conclusion of support from Leverhulme. This is pledged at £50,000.

Evidence of how the first objective has been met is in the final report to the Leverhulme Trust, where details on the fifteen Leverhulme-funded students are presented.

On the second objective, Durham's leadership as an innovator in interdisciplinary postgraduate education has been widely recognised in the Arctic research community. DurhamARCTIC Director (and Leverhulme grant PI) Philip Steinberg has given invited presentations on this topic at Arctic education events sponsored by the British government in Norway and Finland and it has also been the focus of panels at key Arctic conferences. Additionally, leadership of the doctoral training initiative played a key role in Prof Steinberg's award of a UARctic Chair, a position that should further Durham's reputation as

an innovator in Arctic research and postgraduate education and build further research networks.

On the third objective, DurhamARCTIC has already made considerable progress moving beyond the Leverhulme grant to become a multi-faceted research and training centre. DurhamARCTIC (and the interdisciplinary connections among Durham researchers fostered through the PhD training scheme) was pivotal in launching the Biosciences/Geography/Music-based 'Exploring Arctic Soundscapes' project sponsored by Durham's Institute of Advanced Study and the Biosciences/English/Geography/Medical Humanities-based 'Sensing Cold Environments' project that has been shortlisted for UKRI cross-council funding. Additionally, since conclusion of recruitment for the Leverhulme studentships, a number of doctoral students have come to Durham because of the reputation that forged by the studentship programme and institutionalised in DurhamARCTIC. Finally, in 2023, the undergraduate Durham Arctic Society, affiliated with DurhamARCTIC, was initiated to produce the *next* generation of Arctic researchers at Durham.