

Future Human Signature Research Theme PhD Studentships

Details and selection process for the Sandpits

As part of their start-up resourcing, the Future Human Signature Research Theme receive two Vice-Chancellor PhD Studentships for the 2022-23 academic year. We will be allocating these two studentships to named supervisory teams running a pre-determined project. To select these supervisory teams, the Future Human leadership team are running a Sandpit event, specifically designed to creatively generate cross-disciplinary projects that align with the Theme. The Sandpit event will include 20-30 academics, from a range of disciplines, through which it is hoped 8-15 project ideas will be formed. From these project ideas, two supervisory teams will be awarded the PhD studentships, and a further three project teams will be awarded seed-corn funding of £1500 to support the further development of their idea.

More details about the Sandpits are provided in this document and a full briefing pack will later be provided to those academics involved in the Sandpits. It is anticipated that more than 30 academics will be interested in attending the Sandpits, so we need to run a process to select the academics to attend this event. A short application form can be found on the last two pages of this document, which will need to be submitted to Sarah, Lex, and Aylish by 5pm on Friday 15th October to be considered for the Sandpits (email your application form to A.Wood@kent.ac.uk). It is expected that these applications for the Sandpits will be from individual academics rather than pre-formed teams. If you are not able to attend the set dates for the Sandpits, or are not selected for them this time, there are still other ways to get involved with the resulting projects and we will be running a similar process for the 2023-24 studentships.

Dates

22 nd September 2021	Sandpit applications open
15 th October	Sandpit applications close
27 th October	Staff notified of outcome of applications
3 rd November	Pre-Sandpit workshop (delivered live and online, afternoon)
9 th and 10 th November	Sandpits (in person, from 10am-4pm)
17 th November	Pitching/presentations of projects
24 th November	Staff notified of outcome of studentship projects

- In the Sandpits, teams of two or more academics should be formed who will develop and then pitch a project idea.
- Additional supervisors and/or advisors can be added to this team, and these people do not have to be at the Sandpit. They may be from academia (Kent or another institution) or from business/industry. They do not need to be involved in the pitching of the projects.
- Projects will need to be within the scope of the Future Human Signature Research Theme. For more information on this, please see the description of the website (<https://research.kent.ac.uk/signature-themes/future-human/>) and read the short paragraph on the following page. More information on Future Human will be provided in the Sandpit Briefing Pack (provided after 27th Oct) and in the pre-Sandpit workshop .
- Projects will need to be demonstrably interdisciplinary, and ideally involve two or more Divisions.

- In addition to being suitable for a PhD studentship, the project will need to propose a plan to develop and submit an application for external funding.

What to expect from the Sandpits

The Sandpits on the 9th and 10th November will bring together 20-30 academics from a range of disciplines and Divisions. A team of external facilitators will guide the participants through a number of interactive conversations and activities that allow everyone to share ideas and engage their curiosity. Through this process, participants will develop ideas and interests for projects that can be shared with and commented on by peers, allowing a dynamic reframing and revising of ideas. Co-design lies at the heart of the Sandpit, and the facilitators will help support participants to self-organise into collaborative teams centred around a research idea or ideas - suitable for PhD Studentships - that they are interested in exploring further. The formed teams will co-develop their research ideas and gradually work this up into a project pitch that is scheduled for the week after the Sandpits.

The Sandpits are scheduled to run all day and in-person on the 9th and 10 of November. We will be ensuring that the event is organised and run to be as Covid secure as we can make it. Sandpits can be intense, but also intellectually exhausting. The activities across the days will be interspersed with break-out time, coffee stops, and varied tasks to help keep the mind active. We ask participants to be available for the whole of both the Sandpit days, but if you cannot make a section of a day because another commitment cannot be rescheduled, please let us know. We will try and schedule the day so that more flexible activities (e.g. break-out sessions) are run when childcare commitments are more likely (e.g. the school run).

An overview of Future Human

Future Human explores the use of science and technology for human augmentation. Only a true transdisciplinary approach can fully understand the opportunities, limits, challenges, and risks of using scientific and technological advancement to restore or improve performance/function and overcome current limits of body and mind.

Human augmentation is the application of science and technology to improve human performance temporarily or permanently. This can be achieved at two levels: 1) optimisation, and 2) enhancement. Human performance optimisation is the improvement of human performance up to the limit of biological potential without adding new capabilities (e.g. wearing glasses). Human performance enhancement is when performance goes beyond the limit of biological potential (e.g. using binoculars) and can include additional capabilities that are not innate to humans (e.g. night vision goggles). Optimisation and enhancement can be applied to a range of populations, from those with an injury or chronic disease, to an elite athlete. Thus, the outcome of augmentation may be to restore performance/function to that of a 'normal' person or extend it beyond biological potential.

What and how the body can be augmented defines the possible, but other fields such as law, politics and ethics will help determine its place in society. The opportunities that human augmentation provides for changing how we work, how we stay healthy, and how we live and experience our everyday lives crosses multiple government strategies, Research Councils and Challenge Funds, and provides scope for broad collaboration outside of academia.

The Future Human Signature Research Theme considers both optimisation and enhancement, and the consequences of their development and application across any human population and society.

If you have any questions about the Sandpits or Future Human more generally, please get in contact with Sarah (s.hotham@kent.ac.uk), Lex (l.mauger@kent.ac.uk), or Aylish (a.wood@kent.ac.uk).

**Future Human Signature Research Theme
PhD Studentship Sandpit Application Form**

Name:

Email:

Division:

School/Department/Centre:

Three keywords representing your research interests:

Describe your research interests in less than 50 words:

In a team, how do you ensure your ideas are listened to, and you listen to others' ideas? What role do you normally fulfil in a team? (150 words)

What steps do you take to ensure your research is inclusive? (150 words)

What transdisciplinary approaches inspire you in your field? How might your research approach benefit from transdisciplinary ideas? (150 words)

How would you envisage a supervisory team integrating transdisciplinary inputs into a PhD project and avoid the student being pulled in different directions? Feel free to illustrate your comments with a specific example. (150 words)

How would your research benefit from public engagement? Are there particular examples of external involvement and engagement activities that you have experience with? (150 words)

Please email your form to a.wood@kent.ac.uk with the subject heading 'Future Human PhD Sandpits' by 5pm on Friday 15th October.