

CASE Studentship Open Competition

Guidelines to applicants

Usual NERC rules and regulations governing CASE research students apply. All applications will be assessed in open competition.

Applications will only be accepted through the JeS system.

General

The PhD must be completed in four years, including writing up and submission. There must also be clear benefits from the proposed external collaboration.

Impact

Impact is one of the scheme's main criteria. Applications must be able to demonstrate the potential for societal or economic impact through collaboration with the CASE partner, as well as the provision of high quality training in research skills. The moderating panel will be looking for evidence of the potential for societal or economic impact through the CASE collaboration.

CASE Partner

The CASE Partner should be involved in the project's formulation, and there should be added value to the studentship in it being a CASE award. The CASE partner will provide a supervisor to oversee the student's training. Proposals where the CASE contribution is limited to provision of data, samples or access to land will not be successful.

The CASE partner must be an end-user i.e. an organisation whose primary role is not research, but rather, is to use the outputs of research in developing business, technology, regulation, policy, or social / environmental enterprise, within the public, private or third sector.

The CASE partner must demonstrate that commercial, regulatory, policy-making or enterprise activities form a significant part of its remit and that the focus of the proposed studentship falls within the scope of these activities.

CASE partners should also provide evidence of the need for their buy-in and of the rationale for advancing their activities.

Applications to be considered under the Priority Areas may have Private Sector, Public Sector or Third Sector CASE Partners.

Research Partners

HEIs, Research Council Institutes* (RCIs) and Collaborative Centres can only be research partners, not a CASE partner: RCIs may only apply as the research partner and must partner with an HEI in addition to the CASE partner.

[*http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/noparentrcs.aspx](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/noparentrcs.aspx)

Finance

NERC will fund the studentship via a Doctoral Training Grant (DTG) which includes three and a half years of studentship funding.

The CASE partner must supplement the student's maintenance grant by paying at least £1000pa directly to the student (for the first three years of the award) and will meet the extra expenses incurred by students visiting and working in their establishments. Co-operating bodies are also expected to contribute in cash or in kind towards necessary materials. Costs requested from NERC should be justified and explained, particularly where they are non-standard.

Assessment

Applicants should read the [assessment criteria](#) (Impact; Science quality; Training; Supervisors). The moderating panel will include scientists and end-users from across NERC's remit, so please make applications intelligible to non-specialists.

Moderating Panels have commented that applicants sometimes weaken their case by putting insufficient information in the application form, particularly in the 'Supervisor' and 'CASE Partner' sections. Please include sufficient detail on experience, expertise, and how the supervision will work.

Research topic

The topic should offer genuine scope for doctoral research and innovative science. A strong, well-defined science case should be made, with identified questions or hypotheses, appropriate methodology / approaches and a feasible plan of action. Projects involving development of items of equipment / tools should clearly demonstrate what environmental questions will be answered by the piece of equipment. Projects should involve other aspects of equipment development such as testing and should not be restricted to technical development activities or to using the student as inexpensive labour. Using a tried and trusted technique in a new area is also a valid basis for a PhD.

Workplan

The Case for Support should include a brief workplan, outlining the thesis' main headings, timescales, and experimental design.

Training

The project must be carried out within a strong research training environment, in which the student has access to good facilities and expert staff, and training is provided in research methods and transferable skills. Training should be outlined in the application form and cover both generic and specialist skills. The student should be stimulated and challenged, but not overwhelmed. Assessment panels have pointed out that applications often fail to provide evidence of the quality of training the student will receive.

Knowledge Transfer

Details of how you will ensure that knowledge generated from the proposed research will be effectively transferred, wherever appropriate, for social good and to benefit the UK economy.

Supervision

The university, company or research institute where a studentship is held must ensure that effective supervision can be provided until completion of the PhD programme. Applications from new supervisors are welcome, although moderating panels are likely to be reassured by 'backup' from an experienced colleague.

Guidance for completing the application form:

Help text notes can be accessed within the JeS application form to provide guidance to applicants. Additional guidance for completing the form can be seen [here](#).

Priority Areas

As with the last two years' competitions, up to five studentships will be awarded in each of the six priority areas listed below. The science must fall within NERC's remit and the CASE partner may be public, private or third sector but as with all partners must be primarily a user body whose primary role is not research. This is a change from previous years, when partners for Priority Area applications have been limited to the private sector.

- a) Water
- b) Energy
- c) Food and agriculture
- d) Resource management (minerals, forestry, waste etc)
- e) Financial services (risk management and valuation, including insurance)
- f) Environmental monitoring

To apply for a studentship in one of the six priority areas, please prefix the title of your application **[WATER]**, **[ENERGY]**, **[AGRIFOOD]**, **[RESOURCE]**, **[FINANCE]** or **[ENVIRONMENT]** as appropriate.

Further information on [priority areas](#) is available.

Applications can also be submitted outside the priority areas and will be considered in the general competition

CASE Partner details

Under project partners, please include details of the CASE partner and the work to be carried out by the CASE partner. This should include details of training that will be provided by the CASE partner, the amount of time the student will spend with the CASE partner and any details demonstrating the CASE partner's input. Comprehensive details of the CASE supervisor should be included in the 'Edit Supervisor' section.

CASE partners (or the principal partner if there is more than one) must now have a base in the UK.

Case for Support

A Case for Support MUST be attached to all proposals. The details of the work to be carried out and the science impact should be included in this section. This can be up to 2 pages of A4 and should be 11 point Arial with 2 cm margins; applications with a smaller font size will be rejected.

Supporting Letters

NERC's moderating panels are very keen that CASE partners demonstrate their enthusiasm for applications they are involved in, so from this round a supporting letter from the CASE partner (or from the senior partner if there is more than one) is required. [Further information](#)

Fieldwork

The funding requested for UK and overseas fieldwork must be entered within the 'Edit fieldwork' field of the studentship proposal form, along with a **supporting case to include**;

- What is the purpose of the trip(s)/short courses(s)?
- Why is this necessary for the student's training?

A separate Fieldwork form MUST be completed with a breakdown of the requested costs and submitted as an attachment to the studentship proposal. This form can be found on the NERC website at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/studentships/>

Exceptional consumables

NERC provides limited funding for exceptional consumables (NOT equipment) required for particularly costly laboratory or other work, **up to a maximum of £3,000 over 3 years (i.e. £1,000 p.a.) in addition to the Research Training Support Grant (RTSG).**

For CASE awards, it is expected that the CASE partner will contribute to any exceptional costs; however NERC will consider applications for funds to match the CASE partner's contribution. The amount requested should be entered on the studentship proposal along with a brief description of what this would fund. **Further detail MUST be provided on a separate form using the Exceptional Consumables proforma which is downloadable from the website at: [NERC Funding Guide](#)**

Funding for conferences is included in the grant, so shouldn't be requested separately.

Open CASE application checklist

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| Applicant/Supervisor/s | Are all those named on the application Je-S registered? |
| Project Partner | Are the CASE partner details entered within the Project Partner field? |
| Project Summary | Have you included a small summary of the project? |
| Letter of Support | Has a supporting letter from the main CASE partner been included? |
| Funding | Has the contribution to the student and department been entered in the Funding field? |

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| Fieldwork | Have you requested fieldwork funds in the proposal? If yes, have you attached a fieldwork form along with the proposal? |
| Exceptional Consumables | Have you requested exceptional consumables funds in the proposal? If yes, have you attached an exceptional consumables form along with the proposal? |
| Case for Support | Have you attached a Case for Support which should be a maximum of 2 pages of A4? |
| Services & Facilities | Have you attached the appropriate application form and submitted it along with the proposal? |