

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Doctoral Landscape Webinar BBSRC-NERC

Version 1.0, February 2024, based on questions asked during or prior the webinar on 27th February 2024.

Eligibility

- 1. Is there a requirement to include a partner from a non-Russell group University?**
No, there are no requirements to include a partner from a non-Russell group university. We do encourage applications to represent a consortium of academic and non-academic organisations and applications should consider the diversity of HEI institutions and non-academic partner organisations to deliver the vision for the training programme. BBSRC and NERC may balance the portfolio from the highest quality applications by the diversity of higher education institution types and non-HEI partner organisation to ensure all funded consortia are diverse and collaborate with a diverse group of partner organisations.
- 2. Applicants can submit a single bid for NERC and BBSRC funding. If successful would the BBSRC and NERC programmes have to be run as one programme or would there be 2 separate awards for two programmes resulting from the single bid?**
If both BBSRC-only and NERC-only applications from an RO are recommended for funding, these will both be supported as per the assessment process and awarded as two separate training grants.
- 3. Can existing DTPs apply to this opportunity?**
Yes – existing BBSRC and NERC DTPs are eligible to apply for a landscape award through this funding opportunity.
- 4. Does this accommodate for international doctoral students/Can studentships be offered to overseas candidates?**
All studentships will follow the existing eligibility criteria outlined in the UKRI Terms and Conditions for training grants and the international eligibility guidance (<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/UKRI-030221-Guidance-International-Eligibility-Implementation-training-grant-holders-V2.pdf>). Successful award holders may recruit up to 30% international students each year per award.

Balance of award types:

- 5. How many joint BBSRC-NERC DLA awards do you expect to make in this round?**
There is no set target for joint vs RC council only awards - this will depend on the quality of the applications received and numbers of studentships requested by each.

Studentship numbers:

- 6. Is the number of students double for the combined BBSRC/NERC?**
Joint BBSRC-NERC awards will support a combination of notional studentships for BBSRC and notional studentships for NERC. Each application must have a minimum of 10 students



per cohort. You can apply for up to 15 NERC studentships per cohort and there is no cap on the number of BBSRC studentships which can be requested.

7. How many studentships will be provided for the joint BBSRC-NERC route?

There is no set target for joint vs single council only awards - this will depend on the quality of the applications received and numbers of studentships requested by each.

Scope:

8. Will there be provision for dedicated training fellows/researcher developers for these programmes, given that the number of studentships is reducing per programme, and this will affect budgets for in-house staff?

Programme management costs can be used to support the administration of the award. Awards can be used for training of staff involved in the delivery of the training grant (supervisors and administrators), particularly the flexible fund. However, training grant funds are not intended to relieve the RO of any part of their normal expenditure.

9. To what extent is 1 + 3 model feasible in a NERC or as NERC+BBSRC remit training landscape proposal (given the difference in funding levels for studentships between the two councils)?

A 1+3 model is not possible through these doctoral landscape awards. These awards support the provision of doctoral training between three and a half to four years in length for NERC notional studentships and BBSRC doctoral studentships for four years in length.

10. Will the doctoral landscape award only allow studentship projects including a minimum of two partners, e.g., lead university and hosting partner?

Individual studentships should be tailored to the needs of the individual and research project. There are no requirements for the number of partners within a studentship project. Doctoral Landscape Awards will be required to have 25% of their studentships as CASE, with the aim of these studentships is to promote collaboration between the research community and end-users of research.

11. What is out of scope?

The call aims to provide doctoral training within the biosciences and environmental sciences. These awards will provide broad and flexible funding to support talented doctoral students, breadth and diversity in the research supported and ensure we as a community are rapidly responsive to new and emerging research ideas as well as providing opportunities to engage with non-academic partners. We would not expect to see a narrowly focussed or single discipline applications.

Training:

12. Will students still be allowed to finish within 3 years (minimum registration period)?

No - the minimum funding duration for a studentship will be three and a half years for NERC doctoral landscape awards and 4 years for BBSRC landscape awards.

13. Is the maximum funding period for students who do not undergo a placement 3 years and 9 months?

No, the maximum funding period, under normal circumstance of a full-time PhD student with no extensions, ranges from 3.5 to 4 years for NERC students and 4 years for BBSRC students.

14. Is Collaborative partner synonymous with CASE partner?

No, they are distinct. Collaborative partners are organisations will not host students during the award. Collaborative partners provide additional benefits to the students' experience such as work experience outside of academia, training, equipment, and access to facilities and resources.

CASE studentships are delivered in collaboration with non-academic partners and need to meet the CASE requirements outlined within the funding opportunity. These may be delivered by a collaborative partner. CASE studentships do not have any formal partnership requirements but do offer additional benefits for the student.

Funding:

15. Is it possible to cost for higher PhD fees where this is standard for the institution? Similar to EPSRC CDTs where Cambridge was able to apply for their full fee rate?

Notional studentships will be supported by BBSRC and NERC using the indicative figures within the funding opportunity. These will be indexed to accommodate rises in the UKRI fees level over the lifetime of the studentship.

UKRI Ts and Cs state: 4.7 Where this fee is higher than the annual rate set by Us, You may draw this from the Training Grant subject to any Specific Conditions. So yes - you may claim the full rate but cannot apply for the specific rate in the application - all awards will be provided the same fee level and they will have to manage their funds accordingly.

Flexible fund:

16. Please can you clarify whether the flexible fund could be used to support a training focused member of staff's salary costs?

The flexible fund is there to support a range of activities, which can cover training and events costs. If an individual is needed for the programme to function, this would best cost for utilising the 'Fee' or 'Programme Management' aspects of the funding. Please see this text from the funding finder:

"The applications must commit to providing sufficient support for appropriate administrative resources. Applications should explicitly outline how administrative structures will be managed and funded. Funds may be allocated for programme management including administration and placement support."

Partnerships:

17. How much financial participation from industries are expected?

All partners need to demonstrate that there is significant added value from their inclusion within the partnership. This may include (but is not limited to) financial commitments to underwrite a number of studentships or CASE conversions, a commitment to provision of access to facilities, or training that cannot be otherwise provided by an eligible institution or strategic links to an important stakeholder or user.

CASE partners are also encouraged, but not obligated to, make a financial contribution to the project including: any costs incurred by the student when visiting and working within their establishment, the costs of necessary material, facilities not possessed by the research organisation that are integral to the CASE studentship.

18. Is it desirable to have collaborators/partners outside own geographical region?

The panel and the BBSRC/NERC executive will consider geographic coverage to ensure the landscape awards are located across the UK. This is to ensure we create a balanced

portfolio from the highest quality applications. However, there is no stipulation regarding size or geographical spread of consortia. Overall, your consortia should make strategic sense independent of geographical considerations, taking into consideration the "cohort feel" for your students.

19. Will networking events be organized?

Pre-award: Potential applicants are encouraged to make new, and fortify existing, connections with a diversity of academic and non-academic organisations. All partners should demonstrate their added value to the partnership and how students will benefit from engaging with a variety of diverse organisations. Post award: BBSRC and NERC will host and encourage events where successful landscape award holders can network together to share good practice.

20. Are you facilitating any means of interaction for smaller institutions that have valuable research contributions to be able to find and partner with similar or larger players to diversify project portfolios and broaden the overall student experience please?

Potential applicants are encouraged to make new, and fortify existing, connections with a diversity of academic and non-academic organisations. All partners should demonstrate their added value to the partnership and how students will benefit from engaging with a variety of diverse organisations.

Assessment:

21. How will the DTPs that are running less than full term be evaluated on their current achievements?

All potential applicants, including those who already hold training grants from BBSRC/NERC will be assessed on the quality of their application against the assessment criteria within the funding opportunity and using only evidence provided within the application.

22. Can you please detail how joint bids will be assessed in contrast to separate bids? Will there be separate panels or a single panel? What will be the size of the assessment panel(s)?

All applications will be assessed using the assessment criteria outlined within the funding opportunity. There will be a single assessment panel for all applications submitted to the funding opportunity. The size of the panel will be dependent on the number of applications received but we anticipate it will be approximately between 15-20 people.

Application process:

23. Please can you clarify whether for the purposes of the outline application on TFS that collaborative partners are considered to be Project Partners and so this is where they should be entered on the form?

The notification of intent stage requests details for both hosting and collaborative partners (just the name and organisation for each). The full application on TFS requests details about any project partners' contributions who have made a commitment to the partnership for the duration of the award. These include both hosting and collaborative partners. You should add the organisation name and address, project partner contact name and email address and the type of contribution and this information should be added directly into the TFS application.

24. Are you expecting to see formal letters of support from all collaborative partners as part of the Doctoral Landscape Award application?

You do not need to submit a letter of support from each project partner (hosting or collaborative). Within the partnerships and governance section you may upload a joint partnership letter if applicable. This must include all hosting partners and you may also wish to include collaborative partners within the joint partnership letter if applicable.

25. Please clarify in which sections graphics can be added to proposals and how best to add them to bids online?

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form, you should use images sparingly and only to convey important information which cannot easily be put into words. You may add an image in the following sections: vision, approach, student experience and EDI, capability to deliver and partnerships and governance. More information is available on the funding service: <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/how-to-apply/how-applicants-use-the-ukri-funding-service/>

26. Please can you advise on how much the information provided on the NOI form can change in the Outline submission (in particular hosting and collaborative partners)?

Details can change between the NOI and application stages including the project lead and the hosting and collaborative partners. We would expect the administrative lead organisation to remain the same.