

Call for Studentship Proposals for Entry in October 2020

04/06/2019



Changes for 2020

- Clarification of the expectation for RTSG funding.
- Clarification that these instructions and the corresponding form apply only to the ARIES competition and not to any ARIES – other DTP joint studentships.
- Clarification that studentships will not normally be awarded to candidates who already have PhDs or equivalent experience
- Clarification that supervisors that successfully recruited an ARIES/ARIES-SENSS PGR in 2019 as primary supervisor may not apply as primary supervisor in 2020
- Instruction to use online form for final submission of proposals to DTP

Primary Supervisors should complete the **studentship proposal form** and the **studentship research costs form** and **submit to their designated Institutional Sift Panel**. Sift Panels will select projects up to a target number set by the ARIES Strategy Board, and submit these to the Board for consideration. For those who are familiar with EnvEast DTP project proposals, please note that there are **significant differences in requirements** for proposals to ARIES. Successful proposals should then be submitted using the ARIES online form, which will open on 17th June 2019, and remain open for 90 days.

Deadline for submission of [online form](#) to ARIES: 13th September 2019

Project and candidate selection criteria

The Sift Panels will consider the following criteria in making their selection:

A. Proposals must **fall within the NERC remit**. Projects should also fit within at least one of the **five ARIES Research Themes** (see <https://www.aries-dtp.ac.uk/about-us/>). Projects at the borders between NERC science and that of other Research Councils are also very welcome. These latter proposals may be submitted for joint funding through one of our collaborative funding schemes; currently these exist with the BBSRC Norwich Research Park (NRP) and ESRC South East Network for Social Sciences (SeNSS) DTPs (see separate announcements).

B. The following criteria, which are equally weighted, are used to score the project:

1. Quality of the Scientific Experience

- Proposals should demonstrate that the student will be engaged on a **rewarding and relevant** research project that will provide them with a first class research experience
- The proposal should have clearly articulated aims, objectives and focus
- The research methodology should be appropriate and well defined
- The proposal should demonstrate scientific rigour in its approach

- The project should clearly enable the student to demonstrate a level of independence and originality, to test ideas and hypotheses, and to make a contribution to learning that would be potentially worthy of publication

2. Suitability and Feasibility

- The project should be well-suited to a PhD. It will have clear aims that provide opportunities for intellectual challenge whilst having a reasonable element of “security” in that due progress can be made within the time constraints, and by a student who may be undertaking research for the first time
- The project is feasible within the given resource limitations (including financial constraints)
- The project is achievable within the given time frame
- Risks to the completion of the project are identified, and robust contingency plans described that would allow the student to successfully conclude a programme of doctoral level research in the event of delays to, or failure of, the original work plan
- A high-quality research environment exists that will support the student on all levels (e.g. intellectually and practically)

3. Training

- Proposals should demonstrate a high level of commitment to excellence in provision of appropriate and necessary research training by the Supervisory team and their research groupings
- Training should lead to the development of advanced research skills, and not necessarily only within the narrower focus of the project (i.e. they should also be multidisciplinary), as well as developing more generic/transferable skills
- Good prospects for employability are identifiable

C. The advertisement should be compelling and intelligible to potential applicants, and meet all requirements given in the form below. The proposal may otherwise be rejected, or returned for amendment before the internal deadline date above.

Final selection

Final acceptance of projects submitted by the Sift Panels is made by the ARIES Strategy Board, which reserves the right to reject proposals or return them for amendment. Further strategic criteria will be applied by the Strategy Board at the student selection stage, as outlined below. The decision of the ARIES Strategy Board is final.

Studentships will not normally be awarded to students who have already had a period of full-time postgraduate training at the same or higher level, or employment that is the equivalent of such training, unless the nominating Supervisor is able to make a compelling case that to do would clearly represent a good investment of public funds

Co-funding and funding priorities

Up to 6 projects per year with a commitment of 50% co-funding will be advertised as funded opportunities. The Strategy Board will consider all such projects, and produce a ranked list. Where more than 6 such projects are received by the DTP, the remaining projects will be advertised within the main ARIES competition.

ARIES will prioritise the recruitment of applicants to advertised projects in the following order:

1. Candidate excellence (the top one third of candidates will be offered a studentship), irrespective of co-funding or CASE status
2. Projects with 50% co-funding (letter of support required)

3. CASE projects¹ (a letter of support is required detailing the support to be provided by the CASE partner; a proforma is available)
4. Collaborative projects² (brief written confirmation from the partners of collaborative arrangements is required)

CASE and Collaborative projects are equally-ranked, so long as the ARIES target of 35% CASE awards is met (a second target is for 70% to be either CASE or Collaborative).

ARIES studentships

ARIES studentships include tuition fees and a stipend at standard NERC rates for 3.5 years, and an amount towards research costs (see below).

Candidates from numerical disciplines

ARIES wishes to encourage applications from students with high level numerical skills, but no degree-level exposure to environmental sciences. We therefore operate a scheme whereby 3 months of additional stipend are awarded to qualifying applicants. These PGRs take advanced-level courses in their chosen branch of environmental sciences in the first 3–6 months of study (see <https://www.aries-dtp.ac.uk/study-with-us/quantitative/>)

For a project to be eligible for this, Supervisors must indicate in their project advertisement that applicants with numerate degrees would be acceptable (e.g. Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Engineering). Supervisors will be asked to indicate candidates who they believe are eligible for this funding at the nomination stage.

The scheme is based on similar principles to those of the NERC REP scheme (<https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/available/postgrad/advanced/experience/>).

Research Costs

ARIES places a notional value of £8,000 on Research Costs available for each studentship it funds, and requests must be justified within the Research Costs Form. The DTP will hold central funds for each student for their attendance at conferences and external training events (conditions will apply). These funds are held separately as NERC does not allow research funds to be spent after the end of the funded period of study.

¹ Any organisation that is **not eligible for NERC funding** may be a CASE partner, whether or not they are an ARIES partner. The student is required to spend a minimum of three months with the CASE partner at the partner's cost. The CASE partner also pays a minimum of £1,000 per year towards the student's research and training costs.

² Some non-HEI partners are ineligible to act as CASE partners according to NERC regulations, or do not have the means to support CASE award requirements in full. We therefore recognise the concept of a "Collaborative" award, in which the partner(s) is/are involved in co-designing the project, nominating a member of their staff to join the supervisory team, and undertaking to host a placement for the PGR involved.