

Recruitment Procedure

06/06/2024



Advertising Allocation

All HEIs are required to match-fund studentships they host at a rate of 35%, calculated as 3.5 years of UKRI fees and stipend, allocated RTSG, and cohort training costs.

Each year, we will advertise three times the number of expected studentships available. For a notional studentship allocation from NERC of 15, the total number of studentships expected each year is 23 (69 advertisements). All non-HEI hosting partners and HEI Schools receive an advertising quota of 2 studentship per year, and the remaining 55 advertisements are allocated to HEIs based on their NERC income (determined from GOTW in May each year).

For 2025 intake the advertising allocations are:

Non-HEI partner	Advertising Quota
BAS	2
BGS	2
BTO	2
EI	2
JIC	2
MBA	2
PML	2

HEI Partner	Advertising Quota
RHUL	5
UEA	29
UoE	5
UoP	14
UoK	2

Call for Studentship Proposals

In June 2024 a speculative call for proposals will be made. Institutional Sift panels have the responsibility of selecting studentship proposals up to the quota allocated and coordinating submission of these to the DTP using the online studentship proposal form. Detailed instructions will be issued with the ARIES Call for Studentship Proposals.

Advertisement

Each HEI is responsible for advertising studentships for which it will act as the Registering University, including those hosted at a non-HEI. The ARIES Office will coordinate advertising of all proposals on the ARIES website, and through social media.

Match-funded Opportunities

Studentship proposals that have confirmed 50% match-funding at point of submission to ARIES will be advertised as such and candidates will be prioritised so long as they are ranked in the top 2/3 of our applicants following the DTP interview (see 'Funding Priorities' below). We recognise that not all funding from external sources may be confirmed at this stage. Match-funding is welcomed at any time but securing match-funding prior to **6 March 2025** will mean the candidate is eligible for prioritisation in this manner. If a PI is seeking match-funding that may be confirmed at a later date, we ask that this is indicated on the proposal form.

Applications

Applications will be made to the University of Registration for individual projects that have been approved for advertising by ARIES. Primary supervisors will be informed by support staff at the University of Registration when they have an applicant. Local support staff will also advise of applicants' eligibility for NERC funding.

Candidates may apply for **up to three** ARIES projects each year. Swapping of candidates between projects is not permitted. If a supervisor feels that an applicant would be better suited to an alternative project, they may contact the applicant and encourage them to apply to the alternative project, **but only prior to the advertised application deadline**.

Following nomination, candidates will be contacted to provide application documents directly to ARIES.

Nominations

- For studentships within the main ARIES competition for funding, primary supervisors may select **one** candidate for nomination for interview by the ARIES DTP Interview Panels.
- For studentships with confirmed 50% match-funding (advertised as 'funded opportunities'), primary supervisors may select **two** candidates for nomination for interview by the ARIES DTP Interview Panels. Preferred candidates should be clearly identified.

Nominations should only be made after an interview process where candidates are interviewed by more than one person - members of the supervisory team should be involved with the interview process and we especially encourage the inclusion of case and collaborative project partners in the interview process. Supervisors should refer to the [ARIES Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

Nominations should be submitted to the ARIES Office (aries.dtp@uea.ac.uk), using the ARIES Candidate Nomination Form. Supervisors will be contacted to nominate a reserve candidate should the first-choice candidate withdraw their application five or more working days before the DTP interviews.

ARIES interviews

All nominated candidates will be interviewed by an ARIES panel, chaired by a member of the Strategy Board, plus at least three panellists. Where a conflict of interest arises, a panellist will recuse themselves. At least two different ARIES partners will be represented on each panel and panels will be broadly thematic in composition.

Scoring must be consistent across panels such that a ranked list of all ARIES candidates in a particular year can be reliably produced. ARIES interviews will therefore follow a standardised protocol, and all panels will use the same interview assessment forms and scoring system. Standardised questions will be made available, although ARIES does not wish the use of these to stymie discussion during the interviews. To aid cross-panel comparison each panel will normally interview a minimum of 5 candidates and in addition, a 'roving panellist' will attend interviews in every panel, to assess parity of experience and marking.

Selection of candidates for funding

The Chair of the ARIES Candidate Selection Panel will receive the collated candidate scores, comments and rankings as compiled by the ARIES Office, and will produce a proposal of the primary metric from which funding thresholds are determined, for agreement by the Studentship Panel. Scores across interview panels will be examined for inconsistencies. Reports from the panel Chairs will be paramount in determining the quality of the candidates interviewed by a particular panel (and hence whether the scores provided are comparable to other panels').

All interview scores, comments, and rankings will be provided to the ARIES Candidate Selection Panel before a meeting to be held shortly after the interview day(s). This Panel shall be composed of the Director, the Head of Equality and Diversity, Interview Panel Chairs, and Strategy Board members with an interest in the process. The Candidate Selection Panel will consider all of the available data and agree a final ranked list of candidates, based solely on the excellence of those candidates. Any candidates that have received equal or near-equal scores will be discussed individually to ensure that the ranked list accurately reflects the most suitable candidates. Within this group the panel may take strategic and financial considerations, and considerations relating to the [ARIES Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) into account.

The studentship panel will determine a threshold in the ranked list below which candidates are not deemed of sufficient excellence for ARIES funding.

Funding Priorities

Funding will be allocated according to the following priorities:

- 1) studentships with confirmed 50% match-funding (candidates ranked in the top 2/3)
- 2) according to candidate ranking as agreed by the Candidate Selection Panel taking the following into account:
 - a. only 30% of PGR students in each cohort may be international
 - b. 35% of studentships awarded will be CASE¹
 - c. 70% of studentships awarded will be collaborative²

The decision of the ARIES Candidate Selection Panel is final.

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

² 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.

The ARIES Office will issue studentship offers (and rejections) in accordance with the outcomes of the Candidate Selection Panel meeting, liaising with supervisors and local support staff at partners as appropriate.

Supervisors should note that projects funded by ARIES must not be substantially changed without specific permission from the Strategy Board.

Equality and diversity in the ARIES recruitment process

The ARIES Doctoral Training Partnership is committed to equality, diversity, widening participation and inclusion in its work with PGRs, supervisors and partners; and in its interaction with the research community and beyond. Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be provided with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed in an environment which enables them to do so.

This commitment is made with specific reference to a person's age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity/paternity, race, religious belief & non-belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The public sector equality duty gives public bodies legal responsibilities to take proactive measures to address equality, to help us to tackle and address persistent and long-standing issues of disadvantage and inequality.

Promoting equality of opportunity for supervisors and applicants:

- All Hosting Partners are required to collect and report EDI data for supervisors submitting proposals to ARIES, and we monitor success rates within the studentship proposal competition.
- All supervisors, at point of proposal, are required to prepare mitigation plans for projects that may be less accessible to some groups, and to consider the safety and inclusivity of the research and fieldwork environment.

Promoting Equality in Recruitment of PGRs:

- We use inclusive and positive language in our advertisements.
- ARIES is a neurodiversity-inclusive partnership, and we enable PGRs to succeed by supporting specific needs and making reasonable adjustments.
- ARIES is a disability-inclusive partnership, and we enable PGRs to succeed by supporting specific needs and making reasonable adjustments.
- Our recruitment process is transparent to both PGRs and supervisors, with detailed instructions and information available on our webpages.
- We hold a pre-application workshop with a particular focus on minoritised groups to provide advice on making the most of a PhD application and to promote a career in the environmental sciences.
- We hold a pre-interview webinar to introduce candidates to the DTP and answer any questions about the interview process.

- Our interviews involve a presentation from the candidate on a topic of their choosing, to enable neurodivergent or anxious candidates to take control of the process and present themselves as they wish.
- ARIES recognises that not all candidates have equal access to opportunities such as Masters' or research placements. Our interview process equally weights future potential with past achievements (given opportunities to date), and panels are given instruction on how to assess these criteria.
- We collect feedback on our interview process from all candidates and panellists and act on it.
- All ARIES studentships are available on a part-time basis, and we support PGRs to make decisions if changing mode of study is required.