

Faculty of Science & Engineering Studentships: Call 2022-23

How to Apply

Students should make their application through the University of Liverpool online application portal:

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/how-to-apply/>.

Students should ensure they include the department name in the 'Programme Applied For' section of the online form, as well as the Faculty of Science & Engineering as the 'studentship type' in the finance section.

All applicants must complete the [personal statement proforma](#). This is instead of a normal personal/supporting statement/cover letter. The proforma is designed to standardise this part of the application to minimise the difference between those who are given support and those who are not.

Candidate FAQ's

Project selection

Can I make multiple applications? You are allowed to apply for two projects as are suitable to your interests. These applications are put forward to the supervisory team of the projects, and they will choose the candidate they wish to put forward for interview. You will only be able to be put forward to interview for one project. If you are selected by a supervisor for more than one project you will then need to choose which you would like to move forward with and inform all supervisors that you would/would not like to be put forward by them.

Roughly how many projects are funded, out of all of the projects advertised? The Faculty of Science & Engineering will be funding 8 fully-funded studentships.

Who is eligible for home student fee rates? The studentship covers the tuition fees for UK students only, what is known as the home student fee rate. All eligible UK applicants, if successful, will be paid an annual tax-free stipend (e.g. £17,688 p.a. for 2022-23) for 3.5 years and will benefit from £5,000 for training, travel and conferences. Eligible UK students will not need to pay tuition fees – these are covered by the studentship. The Faculty of Science & Engineering follow UKRI guidance on who is classed as a UK student. UKRI have a comprehensive document outlining eligibility - please see Annex B of the UKRI Training Grant Guidance.

I am an international student, am I eligible to apply? Yes international students are eligible to apply but international tuition fees are not funded by this studentship. The Faculty of Science & Engineering covers the fees for UK students only. If you are an international student (this now includes EU students), you will need to cover the difference between the UK and international tuition fee through your own funding. You will also need to cover the costs of your student visa, NHS health surcharge, travel insurance and transport to the UK, as these are excluded from the studentship funding. If you can cover these additional costs then you are eligible to apply. In this situation, if you are successful, the Faculty of Science & Engineering will pay you an annual tax-free stipend (e.g. £17,688 p.a. for 2022-23) for 3.5 years and you will benefit from £5,000 for training, travel and conferences.

I have been out of academia for several years, will this affect me? You will not be judged for having been out of academia, whether it is for work, caring duties, illness or anything else. Like everyone else you will need a degree - however there is no time limit on when you were awarded it. We fully appreciate that experiences outside of academia can be a rich source of key skills that you would need for a PhD so be sure to think carefully about skills this experience has given you and make sure you tell us about this. It is likely that the supervisor or interview panel might want to know what drew you back to academia, so use this time to show how passionate you are about research.

I'm not currently at a university so I don't have access to the library or resources - how can I stay up to date with the literature? The easiest thing to do is to speak with the potential supervisor for the project you are interested in and ask them to send you the key literature for background on the project. If there is a specific paper you

want to read and it is not freely available on the internet you can either ask them to download it, or you can always ask the authors. It's very flattering!

What are my chances of getting a PhD if I have only completed a Bachelors degree? You will not be penalised for not having a Masters qualification. However, Faculty of Science & Engineering PhDs are highly competitive and the majority of successful applicants have a masters qualification. This is because of the experience a Masters degree provides. However experience can equally come from many other sources, such as work, both academic and non academic.

Making an application

How do the references work? Do I submit them or just contact details? Please submit contact details for your referees only. A standard email will then be sent from the relevant School, requesting the reference prior to applicant selection. It is beneficial to forewarn the referees to expect the request so they can get it in on time!

What referees should I choose? You will require two referees, one of which must be an academic reference (applications cannot be processed without one). This could be an undergraduate or Masters project/dissertation supervisor or personal tutor, but could also be a module director/organizer, or someone you have worked for in an academic context from your University. If you are unable to find a person to provide an academic reference (e.g. if you completed your degree some time ago) you can ask your old department to provide a statement confirming your attendance and performance based on your records. If you are applying for a position with your current (or past) supervisors it is not advisable to use them as a referee. Supervisors are also competing for funding, so there is a conflict of interest. If in doubt your chosen supervisor can provide guidance on the most suitable referee to include.

Do I need to provide written material as part of my application, and what do I provide? Our institutional application portal is general, meaning that the same portal is used for all postgraduate applications. A piece of written work (such as a project proposal) is not required and will not be used to assess your application.

How long should my CV be? Remember that the supervisory teams will see many applications. When assessing your CV/application, it's best to imagine a tired reader. The best CVs put the key information right in front of the reader without them having to hunt. Cut out all unnecessary words (e.g. use lists or bullet points rather than sentences) and exclude anything you don't feel is directly relevant. A regular CV should be approximately 1-2 pages depending on how much experience you have (if you have loads then do include it).

How should I use the personal statement proforma? Should I just answer questions or use them to write an essay? You can do either. Simply answering the questions will in no way adversely affect your chances. Like the CV, we will be assessing many applications so conciseness is helpful. One of the attributes you look for in an applicant is creativity, could you give examples of this? Creativity is critical in science and engineering and we use it in many ways - when designing experiments, troubleshooting problems or communicating science to others. In the guided personal statement we ask for applicants to demonstrate their creativity in question 4 by explaining how they would improve on previous work - either their own or that of others - to show us that they can think beyond the description provided to them. You may also wish to include aspects of your creativity outside science - many scientists are also artists and musicians - or where you have led creative projects, e.g. outreach events, when you discuss your skills or on your CV as appropriate.

What should I use as an example for question 4? Should it be relevant to the project? In question 4 we are purely looking to see your level of knowledge and enthusiasm so there is no requirement for it to be related to your project. However, it is also going to show us what kind of science and engineering you find interesting so being broadly relevant to the subject is advisable. The exception to this would be if you are discussing a project you worked on which happens to be in a different field.

What should I include for question 5 (Is there anything else you would like to tell us that can help to frame your application)? Is it a problem if I don't have anything to put down? Question 5 is there to give us any information that could help us better understand each application. We included this particularly for applicants who have experienced structural or personal barriers in their education or work that may have limited their ability to show

us their full potential. There is no requirement to add anything here. Many applicants will not need to or may not wish to. Please only use it if you feel it would be beneficial to you.

Applicant selection

Is it more important to have the interest/motivation/desire to study the specific programme, or outstanding experience and academic achievements? It's impossible to quantify these things, every student and scientist has a different set of strengths and weaknesses. That said, a passion for the project is an essential part of being a successful PhD student and would be considered a basic requirement for any supervisor selecting their student. Do remember however that there is some (but not endless) flexibility in what you actually do within the PhD project, particularly in the latter years when you become an expert in that area.

How much does interview performance count vs your application? Both interviews and applications are important. Interviews are a way of getting to know the candidate better and exploring their responses in a bit more detail. However, while you will be judged on your responses you will not be judged (consciously) on your performance. The interview panel fully understands that many applicants are nervous and some people are more affected by nerves than others. It is always advisable to practice for an interview and prepare yourself by reading up on the broader background of the project. We advise you to read our [advice on interviews](#).

PhD life

Is flexible working supported? This will be dependent on the project supervisor. Faculty of Science & Engineering funding does not dictate any work schedule but requires that any deviation from standard working patterns be agreed with your supervisor. It would be sensible to discuss this with them before you apply. The vast majority of supervisors will support a student's requirements but the project may have specific requirements e.g. where lab work or field work is necessary to complete the project.

Can I take a job while doing a PhD? We encourage students to take on teaching or demonstration work, where this is compatible with their training and provided this is approved by their supervisors. Other paid work would require the consent of the supervisor and should not delay or interfere with your research training. If you want to get a sense of a supervisor's attitude without explicitly asking about this you can ask them about the work patterns and its flexibility.