*ISIS Facility Development Studentships 2025*

1st May 2025

ISIS has available a limited number of 50%-funded studentships available to UK users or ISIS partners to run from autumn 2026. A full description of this studentship scheme plus instructions on how to apply is available below and the deadline for requests is 4pm on the 5th of September 2025.

<https://www.isis.stfc.ac.uk/Pages/ISIS-Facility-Development-Studentships.aspx>

**Important Dates**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Date** |
| Call for Studentships | Opens 1st May 2025 |
|  | Closes 4pm on the 5th of September 2025 |
| *ISIS Panel Meeting* | November 2025 |
| *Announcement of Results* | November 2025 |

***What are ISIS Facility Development Studentships?***

ISIS wishes to co-fund PhD studentship projects that benefit ISIS. Studentship projects can be within any of the science areas studied by neutron scattering or muon spectroscopy at ISIS and should have a strong science case, but they must be focused on benefits to the ISIS facility. These benefits may include facility infrastructure development (including software), staff development or to further realise the benefits of a project previously funded by this call.

Projects should provide evidence of how the ISIS facility will benefit beyond the lifetime of the project, including evidence of the wider applicability of the project within the community beyond the immediate PhD student project. **Letters of support, and direct or in-kind contributions from the science and/or industrial community demonstrating the wider applicability and impact of projects are encouraged.** It is recommended that you contact Martin Jones (isis-studentships@stfc.ac.uk) ahead of submitting a proposal to discuss the nature of your facility benefit. Proposal reviewers will wish to know that the project can reasonably be carried out within the duration of a studentship, and that other resources required for the project (e.g. any significant capital or resource costs required) are available from other sources.

***Joint ISIS-Diamond studentships***

Diamond is not running a studentship call in 2025, consequently there will be no joint ISIS-Diamond studentships available in this call.

***How many studentships are available?***

ISIS will make available funding for approximately 6 half studentships.

***Eligibility Criteria***

ISIS Facility Development Studentships are co-supervised by a UK university or ISIS partner country academic, together with an ISIS staff member. Any academic belonging to a UK university or ISIS partner with the authorisation to supervise PhD students may apply as the university supervisor. An ISIS staff scientist *must* be a co-applicant and co-supervisor, and play a full and equal role in the studentship project and supervision, including the interviewing of potential candidates. **Any applicants who have received previous awards must ensure that a one page closing report on any previous studentships has been submitted to ISIS (isis-studentships@stfc.ac.uk) before applying for a new award.**

The student *must* spend *at least* one year of their time at ISIS, in addition to normal short trips for experiments, during their PhD (in a schedule to be arranged by mutual agreement between the ISIS and university supervisors). Standard PhD progression qualifiers (1st / 2nd year reports etc.) may be used to assess the degree of interaction with the ISIS facility. If it is deemed insufficient interaction has occurred, STFC reserves the right to withdraw funding.

Students will be asked to present their work at ISIS student meetings during their projects. A final report on the outcomes of the project and its impact, together with a student leaving report, will be required at the end of the project.

***What will ISIS provide?***

ISIS will provide a fixed amount per year according to the following table which equates to approximately 50% of the cost of a studentship. This assumes that students start in Autumn 2026 with a 4-year studentship.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2026** | **2027** | **2028** | **2029** |
| **Paid to the university directly** | | | | |
| **Stipend (Not London)** | £10,910 | £11,455 | £12,028 | £12,629 |
| **Stipend (London)** | £11,960 | £12,557 | £13,185 | £13,844 |
| **Fee** | £2,628 | £2,760 | £2,898 | £3,043 |
| **TOTAL (Not London)** | £13,538 | £14,215 | £14,926 | £15,672 |
| **TOTAL (London)** | £14,588 | £15,317 | £16,093 | £16,887 |
| **Paid with receipts to the student** | | | | |
| **T&S** | £2000 | £2000 | £2000 | £2000 |
| **Harwell Weighting (UK Students only)** | £3000 | | | |
| **Harwell Weighting (Partner International Students only)** | £3000 | £3000 | £3000 | £3000 |

These amounts are based on [UKRI’s studentship stipend from 2025](https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/developing-people-and-skills/stfc/training/studentship-information-for-students/payments-to-students/). International partners are Italy and Sweden. Harwell weighting for international students replaces standard Harwell Weighting payments and is not in addition. It may only be paid directly to the students on presentation of receipts.

Matching funds from other sources must be secured by the applicant. The student will need to be registered at the host university, and ISIS will make payments to the university to cover the ISIS portion of the stipend and fees on receipt of invoices from the university. ISIS (STFC/UKRI) will set up an agreement with the host university which specifies a schedule for the invoices and payments to the university to cover the ISIS contribution to the studentship, together with other details of the working arrangements for the studentship.

Up to £2000 per year per student for travel and consumables will also be available for research training expenses including the cost of travelling to and from the Rutherford Laboratory. These funds are to be claimed against actual receipted expenditure provided by the student and **will not be paid directly to the University**.

ISIS will provide additional funds for ISIS Facility Development PhD students to help cover their costs while they are located at the Rutherford Laboratory. PhD students may claim up to £3000 over the course of their PhD (**Harwell Weighting**) either for a single extended visit or split up as is appropriate. This money is payable for any additional costs incurred during extended times at ISIS (short visits for experiments are covered by normal ISIS travel & subsistence reimbursement for UK or partner-country users). The ISIS supervisor must provide a letter of support for the claim, which must be submitted to the user office - with evidence of the increased costs - using a standard non-staff expense form. **Funds will only be paid directly to the student**, and not the host university, and a maximum of £3000 can be claimed over the full duration of the PhD. For international students from partner countries (Italy and Sweden) this payment will be up to £3,000 per annum rather than a single payment of £3,000.

***How long are the studentships for?***

Studentships can start at any time after the award but should be filled within 1 year of the award and can be for a maximum of 4 years.

***How to apply?***

The completed application form, together with a 2-page project description of the science project and the facility development component, and an additional 1-page description of the PhD program, training, risk management and outline time plan for the project. These documents, together with any letters of support, should be emailed to Martin Jones (isis-studentships@stfc.ac.uk) by 4pm on the 6th of September 2024. Project description must fit within the 2+1 page limit (not counting supporting letters) and must contain the following headings:

**Within 2 pages:**

* **Background** Background information of the proposal including why it is timely and interesting, and the goals of the project.
* **PhD Project** The scientific project to be undertaken by the PhD student should be described.
* **Benefit to ISIS/Utilisation** How the project will either benefit the facility or profitably utilise facility development previously funded under this call and **must** include details of wider use beyond the immediate research team.

**Within 1 further page:**

* Description of the training and support that the student will receive
* Any major project risks and how they will be mitigated
* Outline time plan for the PhD project (e.g. a simple GANTT chart)

**Letters of Support** Letters of support from researchers and/or industries within the field should be included. Demonstration of a wide potential user base and significant interest in the proposed development are essential.

**Previous Project Outcomes** Proposals from applicants who have previously received an ISIS Facility Development Studentship **must** include a further additional page in their proposal submission listing the outcomes from the previous award. This must include the status of the facility development component of the project and its usage; it should also include the current status of the science project and any publications, presentations, and further grant applications arising from the original award.

***When should applications be made?***

The deadline for applications for this call is 4pm on the 5th of September 2025.

***Selection criteria for ISIS to provide funding.***

The criteria for assessment are listed below and guidelines for marking issued to referees and panel members are given at the end of this document.

**The quality of the science (50%).** External referees chosen from the ISIS facility studentship referees panel will carry out assessment of this criterion (/50). Exceptional proposals will be expected to show world-leading / ground-breaking research with high potential impact academically and/or industrially, likely to result in publication in very high impact general journals and/or top-rated journals for individual fields, or be of strong industrial significance.

**The quality of the benefit to ISIS and the ISIS community (25%).** Appropriate development projects will be of wider use to the ISIS community beyond the immediate PhD project and may focus on any aspect of ISIS including software, infrastructure and staff development (/25). Unfeasible projects, or those of unclear or poorly defined benefit to ISIS will be rejected. Letters of support from institutions other than that of the applicant(s) demonstrating the significance of the project to the wider ISIS community are encouraged and should be included in the application. The appropriate ISIS group leader will assess facility benefit. Continuation proposals must identify how the facility will benefit from new proposal, including any future development and a previous project outcomes report as described earlier.

**The quality of the PhD training (25%).** What will the student undertake during their PhD and how will the combination of ISIS and University resources provide a rewarding and beneficial experience for the student (/25). The proposal must contain a description of the PhD timeline, risk management and training with appropriate milestones highlighted. Members of the ISIS facility studentship panel will carry out assessment of this criterion.

Submissions from applicants who have had a previous facility development studentship must include a further additional page in their proposal submission listing the outcomes from the previous award. This will be taken into account when evaluating the new proposal.

***Selection process for ISIS Facility Development Studentships:***

Proposals will be sent for external review and to the relevant ISIS group leaders. Once scores from reviewers and group leaders have been received, a selection panel consisting of ISIS staff and members of the ISIS user community will score the PhD program, assess the referee and group leader scores and comments, and then rank the proposals for potential funding. In addition to the above selection criteria, ISIS will seek a breadth of science areas and partnering universities when making a final decision on which applications will be supported, and will also be concerned regarding diversity of successful applicants. Scoring guidelines for referees, ISIS group leaders and panel members are given in the appendix to this document.

The panel will meet to review proposals soon after the application deadline, and applicants will be informed by the end of November 2025, after which a list of funded project titles and PIs will be published.

***Proposal information:***

Applicants should provide the information requested on the application form. The description of the research project should take into account the selection criteria given above and should be a maximum of 2+1 pages (3+1 pages for continuation proposals).

Certain information (applicant and institution, general project description) may be made public by ISIS for successful proposals.

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**Appendix – Scoring Guidelines**

**ISIS Facility Studentships – Guidelines for External Reviewers**

Proposals should be scored based on the following criteria, in order;

* The quality of the science **(/50)**.
* Suggested score ranges for proposals are given in the table below. The two criteria should be scored independently and therefore may appear in different grade categories.

Please note that your comments will be used to provide feedback to applicants.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Score*** | ***Criteria*** |
|  | ***Exceptional*** |
| *Science*  *(41-50)* | World leading / groundbreaking research with high potential impact academically and/or industrially, likely to result in publication in very high impact general journals and/or top-rated journals for individual fields. |
|  | ***Excellent*** |
| *Science*  *(31-40)* | Nationally leading and internationally competitive research likely to produce publications in high profile general journals or individual journal fields. |
|  | ***Good*** |
| *Science*  *(21-30)* | Nationally and internationally competitive research likely to produce publications in good quality area-specific journals. |
|  | ***Fair*** |
| *Science*  *(11-20)* | Nationally competitive to nationally leading research. |
|  | ***Poor*** |
| *Science*  *(1-10)* | Aspirations for nationally competitive research. |
|  | ***Rejected*** |
| Science  (0) | Unacceptable/poor Science / Not feasible Science programme. |

**ISIS Facility Studentships – Guidelines for Group Leaders**

Proposals should be scored based on their benefit to ISIS (**/25**). New and continuation projects should be judged equally as per the scoring guidelines below. Continuation projects must focus on facility development previously funded under this call and justify the benefit of its further exploitation. Evidence should be provided in the application on the importance of the proposed development to the wider ISIS community beyond the immediate PhD project and may focus on any aspect of ISIS including software, infrastructure and staff development. Purely scientific projects without a development aspect or those with unrealistic / undeliverable or unclear benefits to ISIS should be given low scores. Letters of support from institutions other than that of the applicant(s) demonstrating the significance of the project to the wider ISIS community should be included by applicants and be scored appropriately.

Proposals should be judged and scored on their own merits based solely on the information provided in the Case for Support, not tensioned against each other nor should scoring be biased by supplementary discussion with the nominated ISIS or University supervisor(s). Your comments on how the feasibility of the project and whether significant additional resources would be necessary would be valued. Where the group leader is the proposed ISIS supervisor, proposals will be scored on benefit to ISIS by the appropriate division head.

In addition, where more than one proposal is to be ranked, Group Leaders should provide a rank order for their proposals.

Please note that comments will be used to provide feedback to applicants.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Score*** | ***Criteria*** |
|  | ***Exceptional*** |
| *Benefit to ISIS*  *(21-25)* | Essential and Ground breaking development of high importance and/or significance and benefit to ISIS facility / providing significant augmentation to instrument capabilities / high importance and/or significance to instrument staff / unique training or personal development opportunities for staff. Proposal must be of interest and importance to the wider ISIS user community beyond the immediate PhD project and contain significant letters of support from the academic and/or industrial community demonstrating this interest and importance. |
|  | ***Excellent*** |
| *Benefit to ISIS*  *(16-20)* | Novel development of importance and/or significance and benefit to ISIS facility / providing augmentation to instrument capabilities / importance and/or significance to instrument staff / exceptional training or personal development opportunities for staff. Proposal should be of interest to the wider ISIS user community beyond the immediate PhD project and contain letters of support from the academic and/or industrial community demonstrating this interest and importance. |
|  | ***Good*** |
| *Benefit to ISIS*  *(11-15)* | Novel development of some significance and benefit to ISIS facility or ISIS staff / provide complementary or better capabilities to instrumentation / offer new training or personal development opportunities for staff. A few letters of support from the academic and/or industrial community demonstrating some interest beyond the immediate PhD project. |
|  | ***Fair*** |
| *Benefit to ISIS*  *(6-10)* | Novel development or reasonable benefit to ISIS but without the wider applicability of higher scoring proposals, with little community support. |
|  | ***Poor*** |
| *Benefit to ISIS*  *(1-5)* | Incremental development of little benefit to ISIS. Very little interest in the development project with 1 or fewer letters of support. |
|  | ***Rejected*** |
| *Benefit to ISIS*  *(0)* | Technically unfeasible / already extant development / development limited to a single project with no other community interest / of marginal or no benefit to ISIS. |

**ISIS Facility Studentships – Guidelines for Panel Members**

Proposals should be scored based on the following criteria, in order;

* The quality of the PhD program **(/25)**.
* Suggested score ranges for proposals are given in the table below. The two criteria should be scored independently and therefore may appear in different grade categories.

Please note that your comments will be used to provide feedback to applicants.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Score*** | **Criteria** |
|  | **Exceptional** |
| *PhD program*  *(21-25)* | A detailed and extremely well described PhD plan describing all of the following; risk management, critical pathway, integration between ISIS and host university activities, achievable, but challenging research goals, milestones and outcomes, details of supervision and mentoring provision, and details of specific student training. |
|  | **Excellent** |
| *PhD program*  *(16-20)* | A very well described and detailed PhD plan lacking one aspect of the detail of the exceptional plans. |
|  | **Good** |
| *PhD program*  *(11-15)* | Well described PhD plan lacking detail and one or two aspects of the detail of the exceptional plans. |
|  | **Average** |
| *PhD program*  *(6-10)* | Adequately described PhD plan lacking detail and two or more aspects of the detail of the exceptional plans. |
|  | **Rejected** |
| *PhD program*  *(0-5)* | Poorly described PhD plan lacking detail and only detailing one or two aspects of exceptional plans. |