Call for proposals for

*ISIS Facility Development and Utilisation Studentships 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***

We are not anticipating a joint ISIS-Diamond studentship call this year.

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

ISIS will make available funding for approximately 5 half studentships through its general call, with 4 others likely to be funded in conjunction with ***Centres for Doctoral Training.***

***Eligibility Criteria***

ISIS Facility Development Studentships are co-supervised by a UK university academic, together with an ISIS staff member. Any academic belonging to a UK university with the authorisation to supervise PhD students may apply as the university supervisor. ISIS may also accept applications from academics at institutions in ISIS partner countries. An ISIS staff member *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 stu

***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.

.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/).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **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 5th of September 2025. 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.

**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  |

Application for an *ISIS Facility Development Studentship*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project Title** |  |
| **Name of applicant (university supervisor)** |  |
| **University** |  |
| **Department** |  |
| **Postal address** |  |
| **Email** |  |
| **ISIS co-supervisor** |  |
| **Proposed student start date** |  |
| **Length of studentship required** |  |
| **ISIS will provide a fixed amount per year according to the following table** |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
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| **Harwell Weighting (International Only)** | £3000 | £3000 | £3000 | £3000 |

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| **Funding source(s) for non-ISIS part of studentship.** |  |
| **Is a particular student being considered for this post? If so, please provide details (name; (likely) degree result; *etc*.)** |  |
| **Please provide a short (200 word) description of the project suitable for a general audience including suitable science area keywords. (For successful applications, this may be made public).** |  |

**In addition to the above form, please provide a description of the proposed research project. The description must include the relevance of the project to this funding scheme using the headings and selection criteria described above and be of a maximum of two pages. Continuation proposals must include an additional page highlighting previous project outcomes.**

**Please submit the application form and project description to** isis-studentships@stfc.ac.uk **by 4pm on 5th of September 2025.**