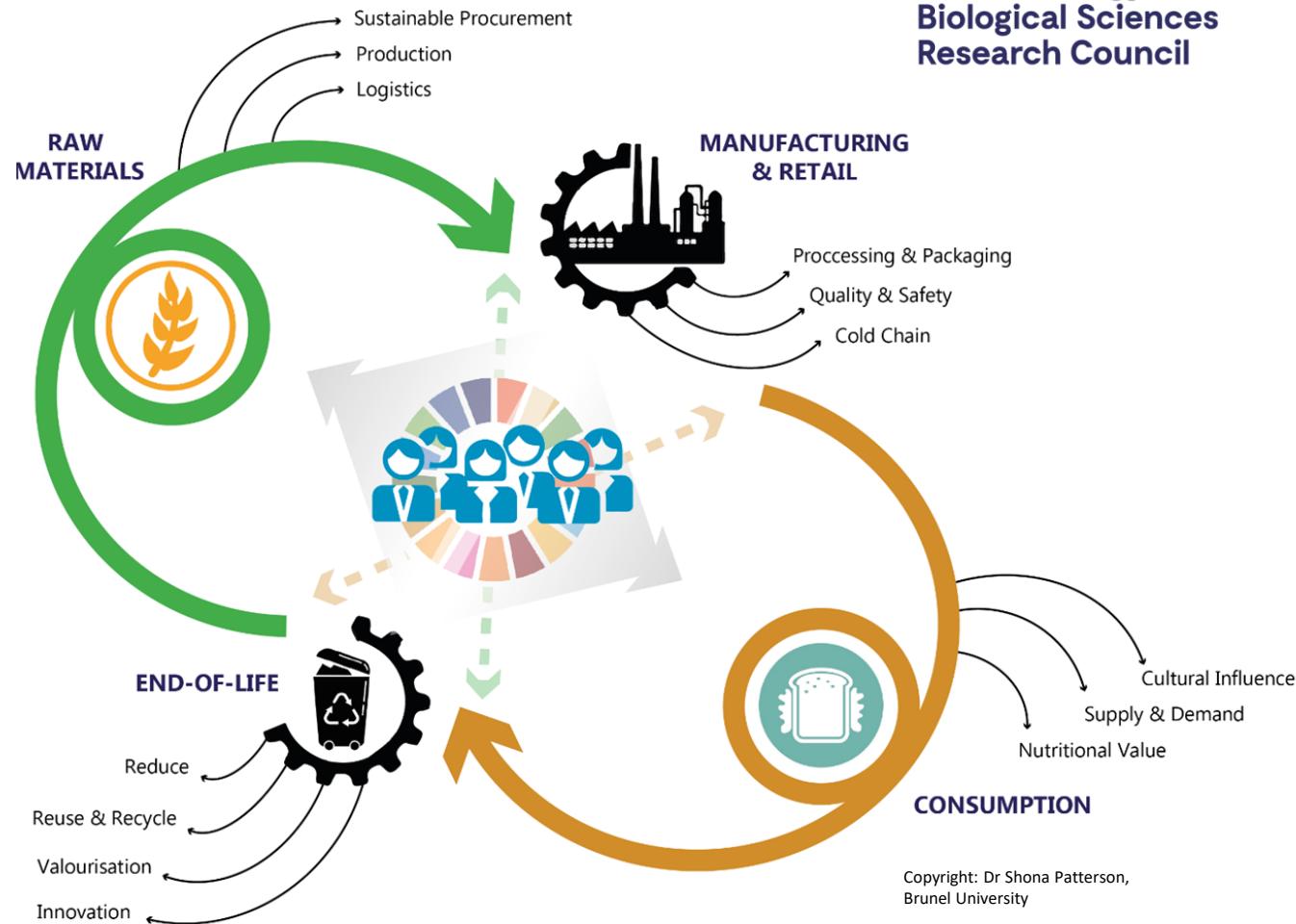


FoodBioSystems DTP Applicant Webinar January 2026

Biological processes across the agri-food system from pre-farm to post-fork



DTP staff and researchers at the webinar

Staff

Lisa Methven: DTP Director

Jane Westwell: DTP Manager

Chengyan Zhu: DTP Finance and Engagement Coordinator

Doctoral researchers

Sinéad O'Callaghan Queen's University Belfast (4th year)

Thomas Smith, Cranfield University (2nd year)

Our vision

To deliver the next generation of scientists and innovators capable of addressing the global challenges of sustainability, efficiency and safety within agri-food production systems, concurrently achieving diversification in addition to improving nutrition and subsequent health and economic resilience of society.

We have 4 cohorts of 107 doctoral researchers (DR) across the partner universities

Our Studentships

- Two types of studentship:
 - i. Standard studentship (student led internship not directly related to project)
 - ii. CASE (project research support and project-related internship provided by non-academic partner)
- All DRs are co-supervised by supervisors at two partner universities
- All studentships are fully-paid for 4 years, specific research project + training in our core cross-cutting themes: Food Systems, Data, Research skills, Entrepreneurship and impact.
- Stipend is currently £20,780 tax free (£22,780 at Brunel University)
- Fees are paid at UK/home student rate – international students are not charged international rate fees at most partner universities. University of Reading will charge international rate fees so FoodBioSystems DTP funded DRs will need to pay the difference between international and home student fees (currently £16,000-£19,000 per year)

Our Partners

Our partners come from organisations active in areas that reflect the entire food chain. They contribute to our doctoral researcher training programme in different ways e.g. by providing access to research facilities or staff expertise; providing internships; and delivering training.

Research and training partners include:

Research support

Agri food industry companies
Agri Food and Biosciences Institute
Diamond Light Source Ltd
James Hutton Institute
Rothamsted Research
Natural History Museum

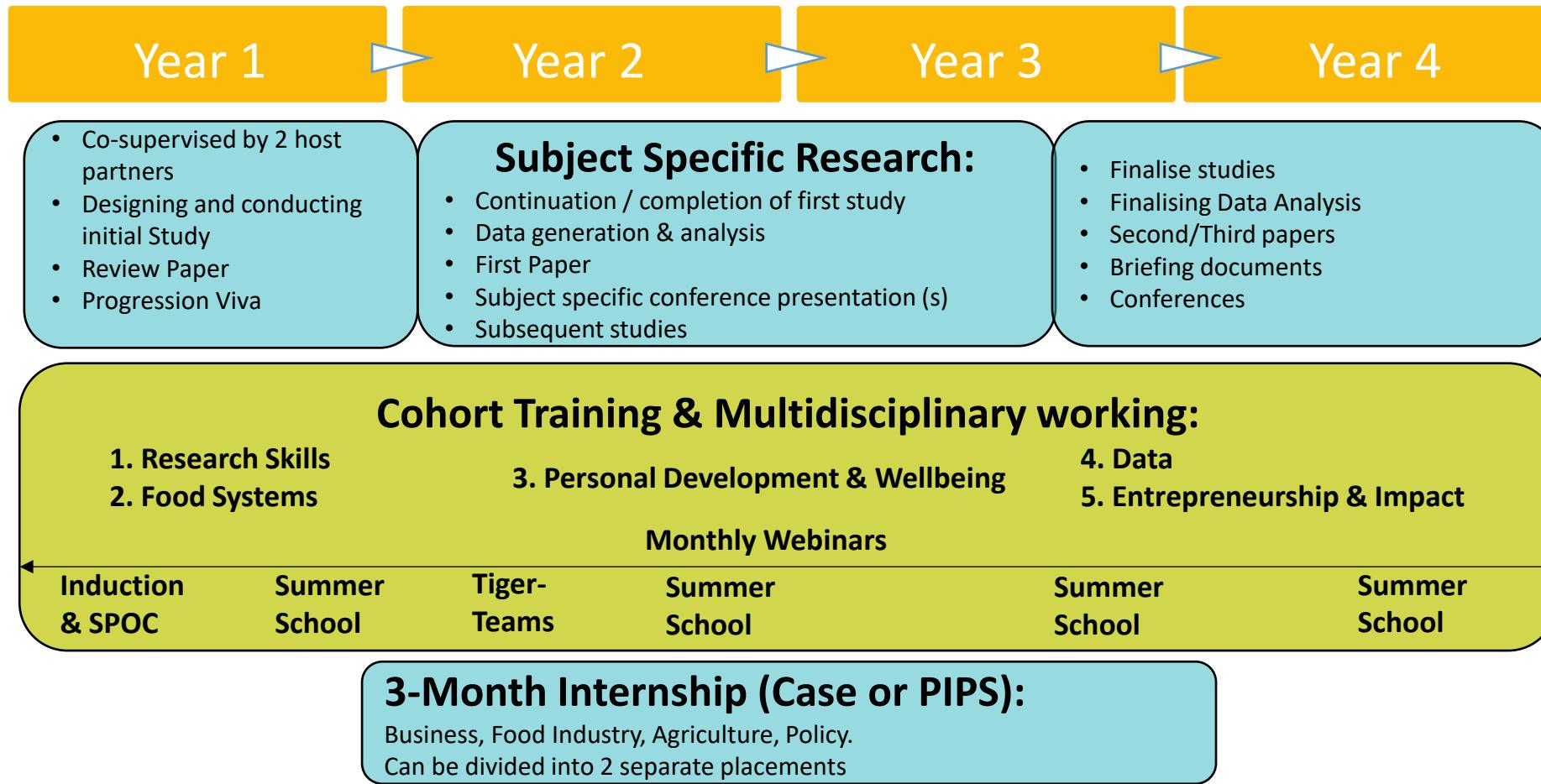
Training

EIT food
IFSTAL
DEFRA
NNedPro
Professional Bodies (e.g. IFST)
Agri food industry companies
NGOs (e.g. Food Standards Agency)

Internships

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
Agri food industry companies
Start-up companies
SMEs
Professional Bodies (e.g. IFST)
Learned societies
Charities
NGOs

The FoodBioSystems Training Programme



Food Systems:

- University Modules
- NNEdPro (Global Centre for Nutrition & Health)
- IFSTAL workshops
- COP Climate Action Studio

Flexible Individual Training:

Personal Development & Wellbeing

- Professional & Career Skills
- Outreach & Public Engagement
- Mental Health Awareness

Data:

- Cranfield Courses
- SYSMic

Business, Entrepreneurship & Impact:

- Entrepreneurship Summit (EIT Food)
- Global Food Venture (EIT Food)
- BBSRC Biotechnology Yes Competition

2026 studentships

- Advertising 40 projects and will award a 19/20 fully-funded studentships through a competitive process.
- Projects span the food chain from farm to fork:
farmed animal health and welfare; food safety; lifelong health; human nutrition; one health; precision agriculture and smart technologies; reducing waste; sustainable agricultural systems; and understanding and exploiting genomics.
- All project details are on our website: <https://research.reading.ac.uk/foodbiosystems/apply-for-a-foodbiosystems-phd/for-phd-students-2/>
- Studentship opportunities are available at Aberystwyth University, Brunel University, Cranfield University, University of Lincoln, Queen's University Belfast, University of Reading and University of Surrey.
- We are looking for candidates from a broad range of scientific backgrounds including:
agricultural sciences and technology; analytical chemistry; arable farming; artificial intelligence; biochemistry; bioinformatics; biological science; biotechnology; data science; ecology, entomology, environmental chemistry and geography; food production and science; genomics; livestock farming, health and welfare; machine learning; mathematical modelling; microbiology; nutrition and soil science.

Applicant information

- Academic requirements: Minimum of Upper 2nd class UK Bachelors degree (or international equivalent)
- All projects will be UKRI BBSRC funded
- Applicants can apply for a maximum of 2 projects.
- All applicants to apply through our on-line application form (No CVs):
<https://foodbiosystemsdtpp.grantplatform.com>.
- **Closing date: Monday 26 January (10.00 am GMT)**
- 70% of the studentships will be offered to UK applicants (people who have UK fees status / UK residents) as we are only allowed to award 30% of studentships to international students
- Visit our DTP website for more information about the DTP training programme and profiles of our current research students.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The FoodBioSystems DTP wants to build a doctoral researcher and staff body that reflects the diversity of society, and to encourage applications from under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

- Applicants can choose to disclose a disability or specific learning difference on the application form so that we can offer reasonable adjustments to interviews. This information is kept confidential unless the applicant chooses to share it with the interview panels.
- We offer a [guaranteed interview scheme](#) and [applicant mentoring scheme](#) to applicants from eligible ethnic groups who hold UK/home student status and who meet our academic eligibility criteria. Deadline for requesting a mentor was 10 January 09:00 (GMT)

Assessment Criteria

Essential Selection Criteria	Stage Assessed		
	Shortlisting	Interview	Selection Panel review of application form answers
Suitability of academic qualifications and background for the project	X	X	
Academic and technical understanding of the PhD project and critical thinking skills		X	
Suitability of project specific research experience and technical skills	X	X	
Suitability of general research experience and technical skills for doing a FoodBioSystems DTP PhD	X		X
Ability to relate own skills to the proposed PhD project	X	X	
Transferable skills/competencies (organisation, problem solving, team-working, and interpersonal/communication)	X	X	X
Understanding of the proposed PhD project in context of the UK agri-food sector		X	
Motivation for undertaking PhD research with the FoodBioSystems DTP			X
Awareness of how the PhD project fits into own career plans		X	

Application Form

In the project application section

- For each project application, focus your answers on showing how you meet the essential and desirable criteria.

In the general research experience section

- Do not mention transferable skills (e.g. organisation and communication) they are covered in a separate section on the form.

In the aptitude and motivation section

- Where possible, use a range of examples from outside of your degree course to demonstrate transferable skills e.g. hobbies, employment, sport, volunteering. You can also include examples related to your degree course, but it is a good idea to use some non-academic examples of experience if you have them.
- Make sure you cover ALL the points in the application form guidance e.g. Strong answers to the organisation question will contain two examples and each example will address all parts of the question i.e. *explaining: what you did, what the outcome was, the effectiveness of your approach, how you think these skills will be useful during PhD studies, and if a task was not successfully completed, what would you do differently in future?*
- Be specific in your answers e.g. if talking about communication skills do not just say “communicated effectively” a better answer is to say what you did to communicate effectively (and how did you know that the communication was effective?).
- Have strong answers about why you chose the FoodBioSystems DTP over other PhD programmes and consider all aspects of DTP studentships – not just the project or funder.

The Interview

The supervisory team will select 4-5 applicants for an on-line interview.

There will usually be 2 or 3 people on the interview panel; usually the Supervisor from the host university, the co-supervisor from the partner university, and perhaps an industry supervisor in CASE studentships.

Interview format

- All interviewees give a short (maximum five minutes) presentation on how they will approach the PhD project.
- This is followed by five minutes for questions about the presentation topic.
- During the remainder of the interview, additional questions will explore:
How your skills and experience prepare you for the specific project; and questions about potential impact of the proposed research project, problem-solving skills, and how a PhD fits into your career plans

Student selection

If you are successful at interview, a panel of reviewers from the DTP Selection Committee will also assess the anonymised written answers from your application form.

The selection panel will make the final decision on awarding studentships for **up to 20** of the 40 advertised projects.

Projects are allocated considering: applicants' performance at interview; reviewer assessments of written answers, supervisor and applicant project preference AND previous assessment of project proposals

By making strong applications to two projects you increase your chance of success. Project supervisors do not know which other projects you have applied to.

Previous applicant success rates

Year	No. Advertised projects	No. studentships awarded	No. international student applicants	% international studentships	No. home student applicants	% home studentships
2022	37	27	501	1.4%	86	23%
2023	50	30	774	0.9%	90	26%
2024	57	29	1176	0.9%	87	24%
2025	37	22	761	0.8%	85	18

Visit our website for more information about the [advertised projects](#), [DTP training programme](#) and profiles of our [current research students](#).

Key dates

Closing date for student applications

Monday 26 January (10:00
GMT)

Student interview window (shortlisted candidates will be contacted by
project supervisors between 20 February – 5 March 2026)

27 February – 13 March 2026

Candidates not shortlisted notified by email

By 10 March 2026

Award/rejection letters sent to shortlisted applicants

By 31 March 2026

Any Questions?