

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Scoping event**

1. ***Where can I find the slides and recording from the CROCUS Overview delivered at the project scoping meeting?***
  - a. Please visit this link: <https://research.reading.ac.uk/meteorology/phd-project-scoping-directory/>
  - b. Disclaimer for video link: colleagues outside of the University of Reading may need to request access from Imogen ([i.a.salt@reading.ac.uk](mailto:i.a.salt@reading.ac.uk)), which will be approved as soon as possible.

### **Proposal**

2. ***When is the deadline for proposals?***
  - a. Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October at 10am. Please send your proposal to [crocus-dla@reading.ac.uk](mailto:crocus-dla@reading.ac.uk). You will receive a confirmation email with a proposal reference number in the format – ‘CROCUS2025\_01’. If you do not receive this, please email Imogen Salt ([i.a.salt@reading.ac.uk](mailto:i.a.salt@reading.ac.uk))
3. ***Is there any flexibility in the deadline?***
  - a. We must stick to this deadline due to the tight recruitment cycle. NERC impose a Universal acceptance date of the third Wednesday in March 2025.
  - b. You must have submitted your proposal by the above deadline. However, we will consider updates to your proposals until Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November at 10am. Updates can only be made to part 2 (supervisory team), to allow a bit more time to confirm details of co-supervisors, particularly for collaborative partners.
  - c. If there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. a supervisor is out of office for most of the period until 31 October), please get in touch as soon as possible by emailing Thorwald Stein ([t.h.m.stein@reading.ac.uk](mailto:t.h.m.stein@reading.ac.uk)).
4. ***How many proposals can I submit for this recruitment round?***
  - a. For this round of recruitment, you can submit up to 2 proposals to be part of as an individual. You can only submit 1 proposal as a lead supervisor.
5. ***My proposal does not directly relate to the Vision alignment (e.g. sustainability), can it still be successful?***
  - a. If the research itself does not link to the Crocus vision elements provided, you may also give specific examples of how your student can engage with these elements through interactions within your research group or organisation, or your research community (such as learned societies or international consortia).
  - b. The Selection Panel have agreed that for this first recruitment cycle, the Vision alignment criteria will be considered a pass/fail requirement, rather than a score to help rank proposals.
6. ***Should proposals indicate what computational training will be offered to the student or is this covered by the CROCUS training programme?***
  - a. If computational training is essential to the project, then this could be included in the distinct training opportunities (section 1c).
  - b. To ensure all Crocus students are trained in quantitative skills, two options of computing/software training will be delivered within the training programme.
7. ***Is there a limit on the number of collaborating institutions within the project?***

- a. The proposal form indicates that no more than 4 supervisors can be named on the project. For highly interdisciplinary or collaborative projects, we acknowledge that more supervisors may be warranted. However, the Selection Panel may be concerned about the feasibility of managing a project with more than 4 supervisors. Therefore, please comment on this in section 3c and 3d.

**8. How specific does the proposal need to be in terms of the pathway students will be expected to follow and objectives?**

- a. Part 1 is designed to match the format of FindAPhD adverts and will be used to advertise the project, should it be selected. We suggest you set out the problem the student will be addressing. Potential candidates may be interested in knowing the scientific objectives and pathway, so this is one space where you may expand on this.
- b. Part 3 will only be seen by the Selection Panel and provides room to expand on the novelty, which could expand on the objectives (section 3a), and to expand on the pathway, which could describe the first two years of the project (section 3d).

## **Collaborations and CASE studentships**

**9. Is there a list of potential collaborative partners?**

- a. We have now made a list available of partners who were involved in the Crocus bid here:
- b. When contacting a partner, you **must** include a disclaimer that no decision on the award has been announced yet and that the call for proposals has been made so that we are able to start the PhD recruitment cycle quickly in the event that Crocus is funded.

**10. Can I include a partner not on the list?**

- a. Yes, we particularly welcome organisations that can serve as a CASE partner.
- b. When contacting a partner, you **must** include a disclaimer that no decision on the award has been announced yet and that the call for proposals has been made so that we are able to start the PhD recruitment cycle quickly in the event that Crocus is funded.

**11. Can I include a co-supervisor from another NERC-eligible organisation (e.g. a University or research organisation that is not a Crocus host partner)?**

- a. In principle, yes. However, please be aware that some organisations have limited their number of partnership contributions and may not be able to support your proposal.
- b. When contacting a partner, you **must** include a disclaimer that no decision on the award has been announced yet and that the call for proposals has been made so that we are able to start the PhD recruitment cycle quickly in the event that Crocus is funded.

**12. What commitment are you expecting a CASE partner to make in the proposal?**

- a. The UKRI definition of a CASE studentship as of 2024 is:
  - i. CASE studentships are delivered in collaboration with non-academic partners and meet the following requirements:
    1. the CASE partner or partners must host the student for between three and eighteen months during their PhD. This placement does not need to occur in one single continuous period
    2. CASE partners must provide co-supervision

- ii. The CASE partners are also encouraged to make a financial contribution to the project including:
    - 1. any costs incurred by the student when visiting and working within their establishment
    - 2. the costs of necessary material
    - 3. facilities not possessed by the research organisation that are integral to the CASE studentship
  - b. On the proposal form we ask you to clarify the details of the CASE contribution in section 2.b.v.
- 13. When the CASE partner commits to hosting the student for between 3 and 18 months, does this need to be as a block, or can it be spread out?**
- a. We can be flexible and UKRI have said that the placement does not need to occur in one single continuous period.
- 14. Does having a CASE partner on the project count towards the 75% target for cross-organisational supervision.**
- a. Yes.
- 15. Does partnering with (e.g.) UK CEH count towards the 75% target for collaboration? Or must it be Reading-Swansea collaboration?**
- a. Collaboration across any of the host partners counts towards the 75% target. The host partners are the University of Reading, Swansea University, UK CEH, BGS, IoZ, NHM, Kew, and NOC.
  - b. Note that NCAS and NCEO are separate entities to the University of Reading and Swansea University. As such, projects that involve a co-supervisor from NCAS or NCEO and one from the University of Reading or Swansea University will count towards the 75% target for collaboration.

## **Funding**

- 16. How much funding does NERC provide for each studentship?**
- a. NERC provides stipend, fees, Research Training and Support Grant and a one-off management fee for each student.
- 17. How do co-funded studentships work?**
- a. Co-funding by the HEI's will be outlined more clearly in the agreement signed by the host organisations.
  - b. Where projects are co-funded, we aim for the co-funder to match the contribution by NERC.
- 18. What limitations are there around international students being offered a studentship?**
- a. We are waiting for confirmation from NERC on this, but prior experience has been that 30% of studentships can be awarded to international candidates. For CROCUS, this would work out at around 6 students per 20 each year.
- 19. How much funds are available for conference travel, lab and field work, etc.?**
- a. This is covered by the Research Training and Support Grant, which has previously been limited to £11k per studentship.
  - b. Subject to NERC and UKRI terms and conditions, as well as the agreement to be signed by the host organisations, this amount may change.
  - c. Based on previous experience, you may assume approximately £3k towards conference travel and subsistence, and £6k towards lab and field work.

- d. Additional funds may be provided by collaborative partners.
- e. Once the studentship has been awarded and the student has enrolled, the Management Team will send out a budget request form to the lead supervisors (around July/August before the student starts in September/October).