

Pre-Call Information for PhD Project Proposals (September 2026 Cohort)

We are pleased to announce pre-call information from the FoodBioSystems DTP, ahead of our seventh project proposal call (the second within the more recent DLA funding). As in previous years, all proposed projects must be hosted at one of our seven partner universities and co-supervised by a colleague in another of our partner universities. Project proposals can be for standard studentships, CASE or match-funded studentships with partner organisations such as from industry, government or charities.

We will release detailed call information and open the on-line submission platform on Monday 8 September 2025. Proposals must be submitted by Monday 16 October 2025 at noon.

We intend to award 22 studentships to start from Autumn 2026. To maintain balance in distribution of projects across DTP partner universities we will have a target number of studentships to advertise and award from each university. However, the distribution of the advertised and awarded projects will remain dependent on the quality of the projects submitted and of the student applicants.

Vision

Our vision is to develop a diverse cohort of scientists and innovators, with in-depth scientific knowledge, advanced technical capability and food systems understanding, who will address the challenges of sustainability, efficiency and safety of food systems, deliver better nutrition and strengthen resulting health and economic resilience of our society.

Scope

The scientific scope of this project call reflects our broad remit and, this will be an **OPEN CALL** where proposals can be submitted across the whole agri-food system. We therefore anticipate projects within (but not limited to) the following research areas: alternative food systems; biotechnology for health (new diagnostics platforms, e.g. within livestock health, or human nutrition related to health); combatting antimicrobial resistance; crop health; farmed animal health and welfare; food safety (microbial or other); lifelong health (involving model organisms, microbial or animal systems in areas of intersection between lifelong health and agri-food-nutrition); nutrition; one health (e.g. research to combat infectious diseases such as fascioliasis, salmonella, or *E.coli*); precision agriculture and smart technologies; reducing waste; sustainable agricultural, aquacultural and food systems; understanding and exploiting genomics.

BBSRC remit

Project proposals must align with the **BBSRC remit** and hence be in one or more of the following themes: **Bioscience for an integrated understanding of health**; **Bioscience for Sustainable Agriculture and Food** **Bioscience for renewables & clean growth**, **Transformative Technologies** and **Understanding the Rules of Life**. Further information about BBSRC research topics is in the UKRI document **Forward Look for UK Bioscience**.

Supervisor Eligibility

- The lead supervisor must be from one of the seven academic partners (Aberystwyth University, Brunel University, Cranfield University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Lincoln, University of Reading and University of Surrey) and meet BBSRC PI-status. The student will be based at the host department of their lead supervisor and registered as a PhD student at that university.
- The second supervisor (co-supervisor) must be from another partner university.

- At least one of the supervisors must have successfully supervised at least one doctoral thesis to completion (as lead supervisor).
- Lead supervisors who have been in receipt of two FoodBioSystems DTP studentships in the last two consecutive years (i.e. studentships awarded and accepted in both the 2024 and 2025 cohort) are not eligible to submit a proposal as lead supervisor in this call. They will be eligible to apply as lead supervisor during the project call for 2027 entry cohort. Proposals as co-supervisor will still be accepted in this project call.
- Each supervisor **can lead on only one proposal per year**, they can however be co-supervisors on other proposals

Call Information

A [proposal drafting document](#) is available for working off-line. Applications must be made on the FoodBioSystems applications portal. This will open for applications in early September. Proposals that are submitted by email will not be processed or reviewed.

Applicants will be asked to include in the proposals:

- a project outline that includes: aims, project justification, a research question, research objectives, a research plan (supported by the 1 page Gantt chart)
- a description **and** justification of the project's fit with FoodBioSystems science themes
- a demonstration of the novel aspects **and** potential impact of the science addressed by the project
- information about project specific training requirements or opportunities
- information about the project team's experience and expertise across all areas of the project **and** an outline of how the supervisory team will be set up to engage with the student
- consideration of diversity in the proposal (related to inclusivity of project e.g. project design, and delivery of the research and related activities by the student)

All proposals will be assessed against criteria outlined on the [proposal drafting form](#) and on the applications portal.

We encourage re-submission of project ideas from previous calls. However, please note that proposals will require amendment to address previous feedback.

Members of the current Management and Selection Committees are available at partner universities to provide guidance on development of project proposals. Committee members at each institute are:

Partner	Selection Committee contact	Management Committee contact
Aberystwyth University	Russ Morphew	Iain Donnison
Brunel University	Lorna Anguilano	Valentina Stojceska
Cranfield University	Guy Kirk	Andrew Thompson
Queens University Belfast	Katerina Theodoridou	Niamh O'Connell
University of Lincoln	Bukola Onarinde	Simon Pearson
University of Reading	Anisha Wijeyesekera	Lisa Methven
University of Surrey	Ruan Elliott	Ruan Elliott

Information for proposals led by Cranfield University

Proposals (including resubmitted projects from previous rounds) must be sent to one of the Selection Committee contacts at Cranfield University for review at least three weeks prior to the Submission deadline. The expectation is that Cranfield's institutional financial contribution to DLA studentships will be via match-funding from industry, government or charity partner organisations.

Information for proposals led by University of Lincoln

Proposals (including resubmitted projects from previous rounds) must be reviewed by the Lincoln University FoodBioSystems Team **prior** to online submission. Please submit your proposal (using the proposal drafting document) to foodbiosystems@lincoln.ac.uk no later than 18 August 2025 for review and comment.

Each University of Lincoln project requires a total financial contribution from industry of £40,000, which is equivalent to 30% of a 4-year Studentship. At Stage 1 (deadline 18 August), you are required to have obtained an official letter of support, confirming co-sponsorship with financial commitment, from an industry partner. Proposals without industry partner funding will not be reviewed. The University of Lincoln welcomes CASE studentships and match funded studentships. If you have any questions about eligibility of project partners please contact the DTP Liaison Manager.

DTP Office Contacts

foodbiosystems@reading.ac.uk – enquiries relating to project remit, supervisory teams, EDI

[FBS DTPpartners@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:FBSDTPpartners@cranfield.ac.uk) – enquiries relating to non academic partners

Call timeline

Event / Action	Date/Deadline
Project proposal webinar (slides available)	Thurs 19 June 11.30-13.00
Pre-call information shared	w/c 14 July 2025
Call for project proposals & proposal submission site opens	Monday 8 Sept 2025
Partnership event at Kew Gardens (Provisional Booking Form)	Thursday 11 Sept 2025
Call for project proposals closes	Monday 20 Oct 2025 (12.00 BST)
Proposals sent out for review	Wednesday 29 Oct 2025
Selection Committee meets to select proposals	w/c 17 Nov 2025
Management Committee reviews and ratifies Selection Committee decision	w/c 24 Nov 2025
Call for student applications opens	w/c 1 Dec 2025
Mentoring scheme closes (for eligible home fees status applicants from minoritised ethnic groups)	Tuesday 13 Jan 2026
Closing date for student applications	Monday 26 January 2026 (12.00 GMT)
Shortlisting opens on application portal to supervisory teams	9 February 2026
Deadline for supervisors to identify shortlisted candidates	27 February 2026
Student interview window	27 February – 12 March 2026
Deadline for supervisors to confirm interview outcomes	13 March 2026
Selection Panel review shortlisted applications	27 Feb – 13 March 2026
Selection Committee meets and recommends awards	18/19 March 2026
Management Committee reviews and ratifies awards	23 March 2026
Award/rejection letters sent to shortlisted candidates	25/26 March 2026

Version Control

Author	Version	Record of changes	Version date
Jane Westwell	1.0		17/07/2025