

Water-WISER CDT Applications Process 2021 FAQs

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

What is the full meaning of “CDT”?

CDT stands for ‘Centre for Doctoral Training’. Each CDT is a UK Research Council-funded initiative to train at least 50 PhD students over a period of 8 years (5 cohorts of 10). There are centres across the UK in many different fields of science and engineering. Some Universities host more than one centre. The Water-WISER CDT has been awarded funding along with many other centres, which are currently recruiting students for entry in September 2022.

How many years is the programme running? If we didn't apply this year how many years of funding are left to do so?

We will be recruiting for 5 years - Sept 2019 was the first intake and Sept 2023 will be the last intake.

What is the cap on the total number of intakes at the three institutions?

Each September, we expect to admit the following fully funded students – 3-4 at Leeds, 3-4 at Loughborough and 3-4 at Cranfield.

We will recruit 10 Research-Council funded students in total in each of the five years.

In the event one of the host Universities could not get the required number of candidates to fill the available slots...what happens then?

We aim to recruit evenly across the three Universities. If the balance is not correct in one year, we will address this in the following year, for example by making some offers conditional on accepting a place at the University that did not fully recruit the previous year.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS:

Is there any link to check out the application portal?

<https://www.waterwisercdt.ac.uk/>

The qualifications requirements are a 2:1 first degree minimum. What if a prospective candidate doesn't have this, but is in possession of MSc degrees in relevant fields, has published papers in journal articles, and has significant work experience. Would you consider such a candidate?

We expect a large number of high quality applications, so usually we would select applicants with a 1st class degree. For applicants who do not meet the 2:1 minimum requirement, we would have to make a special case but there will be the option for this to be considered. We place a very high value on experience, and we understand that for some applicants, particularly those with significant work experience, the original first degree may be less relevant than their subsequent experience.

Will all the applications be assessed just by the Leeds admissions department (I think that is how the applications are to be addressed initially) or will Loughborough and Cranfield be included in the application process and aware of all applicants' credentials?

The admissions teams and shortlisting/interviews panels across the three Universities will work closely together to ensure a fair and balanced process. No University will make any decisions without fully liaising with the others. The CDT management team won funding from the UK Research Council in part by demonstrating their extensive track record of successful collaborations and effective partnerships.

I am currently enrolled on a masters programme, planning to submit shortly - but graduation may not occur until the autumn. Will this cause a conflict of interest in terms of my application?

No, this is normal. Please advise the admissions team of your situation, so that in this case we are aware that the MSc qualification will be late to arrive. Offers will be conditional on achieving a 2:1 first degree minimum, and usually offers will not be conditional on achieving an MSc.

It seems that we will co-design the research proposal during the first year of the CDT programme, which is great! What is the level of detail of the research proposal expected at the application stage?

On the current Leeds application website, a 'proposed research area' and a 'summary of research interests' are asked for. We suggest you combine these.

We expect applicants to provide up to 2 A4 pages explaining their likely research interests and/or project ideas, showcasing their relevant expertise and experience, and not least their ability to write a concise and effective personal statement.

The programme is designed so that applicants will spend the first part of the programme engaging with academics, industry and impact partners to co-create a proposal. The application statement is more about informing the admissions team about the kind of areas that the applicant may be most suited to, so that we can recruit a balanced, diverse intake of high-quality students.

Do you think it is necessary to find a supervisor before you apply for this PhD?

No, there is no particular need to find a supervisor before applying. However, a high-quality applicant will have done significant research, and made contact with potential supervisors early on in the process, and this will inform their application statement.

If we have further questions, who should we speak to?

Contact j.mckay@leeds.ac.uk (Water-WISER CDT manager) and/or phd@engineering.leeds.ac.uk for the Leeds Doctoral College admissions team (this team monitors all applications for all CDTs at Leeds).

QUESTIONS FROM OVERSEAS STUDENTS:

I'm an overseas (including EU) student. May I apply to this PhD program?

Applications are open to both UK and overseas (including EU) fee rated applicants, however the number of full scholarship awards for international applicants is limited by UKRI (30% per academic year). Some additional places are also available for students who have their own funding.

Due to limited places for international candidates, if the CDT cannot award you a place then you should try to obtain funding from other sources (e.g. a government/industry scholarship or Commonwealth Scholarship) to join the programme. You can then benefit from all the training activities and the cohort development.

If you need an offer letter of a place on the programme in order to apply for a scholarship, we will consider this in some cases. We are likely to have a high number of these applications (for offer letters only) which generates a large workload, so we cannot promise to address all these applications. If we give you an offer letter and you fail to get a scholarship at first, we can defer the offer to a following year. We can't allow people to join the programme late, unfortunately.

Is it possible to join the programme and largely do the research from one's home country?

No, our students are expected to be resident in the UK for the four years of study with at least six months of hosted research at an impact partner in Year 3. We understand ATAS and VISA applications may cause a delayed arrival, but you must inform us if this is going to be case.

Are there any requirements on language for those whose first language isn't English?

Yes, you must pass the English Language requirements. You should check the language requirements on the various University websites. These will be standard for postgraduate study.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PART-TIME STUDY:

Is there any allowance for part time study, say 4 days a week?

You can apply to study in the CDT programme on a formal part-time route. This would mean that your stipend would be paid pro-rata. University regulations stipulate that part-time = half-time, not 4 days a week.

Due to changes in circumstances, some students may need to reduce their study hours from full-time to part-time at some point during the programme. This is possible, with full justification, but bear in mind that part-time study at any point in the programme will mean that the student's stipend will be at a reduced rate (i.e. spread more thinly over the full time it takes to complete the PhD).

For those studying on the full-time route: according to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, we will endeavour to accommodate student needs in terms of flexible working e.g. for those with childcare responsibilities. We will assess each request on a case-by-case basis.

Please note that the CDT ethos is such that cohorts of students will work together as a team, learning from, sharing with, and supporting each other. Students who want to work alone and at a distance will be less likely to pass through the shortlisting stage of the application process.

Is it possible to study part-time as an overseas student?

Yes, as above, an overseas student can study part-time, but you would be required to be resident in the UK. The first year will require students to engage with the programme and cohort activities on campus on a regular basis.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PROGRAMME:

The first year of the programme contains taught MSc modules. If one has an MSc, is it possible just to jump straight to year 2?

No, this is not possible. The first year of the programme is mainly about bespoke training activities and PhD project development, and the MSc modules are a small part of this. For those interested in applying to the programme we can talk to you about crafting a module programme that builds up your skills in new areas - for example you may like to take a suite of courses that could build up your skills in GIS and big data... your choice of centre will determine what your first year training options are. Think of the first year as being a 'conversion' year that gets you to the point of being ready for a really hard hitting PhD in Year 2.

Say I decide to start the programme at one of the Universities. Would it be possible to move to another University at the beginning of the second year or later?

Students will remain at their primary hosting institution throughout their four years of study. The primary supervisor for the PhD would therefore be from that University, however students would be able to choose a second PhD supervisor based at one of the other Universities. Students will not be able to re-locate.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PROJECT DEVELOPMENT:

How do students co-create a PhD research proposal? Do we get any support?

During the first year of the programme, students will have the opportunity to meet with potential supervisors, industry and impact partners, find out about new research areas, hear about partner needs, and discuss project ideas through workshops and other fora. Through a formal process of project development each student will plan out their PhD project and set a budget for their project. This process is complex and students will be intensively trained and mentored to produce a robust project proposal.

Which industrial partners are you considering? And how are you supporting them to identify their research needs?

A range of industrial partners committed both direct and in-kind contributions to the centre. Connections with our industry and impact partners are managed by Alison Parker in our CDT Management Team. Alison facilitates the process whereby industry partner needs are matched with impact partner capacity to host placements and projects, and these are in turn matched to research supervisor capacity.

Some projects may be set by industry partners in advance, and these may be advertised so we can recruit directly to that project.

Other students will develop partner relationships at the same time as developing the project i.e. after the student arrives on the programme.

The above is an iterative process, developing throughout the lifetime of the centre.