

## **NDA PhD Bursary Call: Additional Information**

The PhD bursary falls within Lot A – University interactions, of the Direct Research Portfolio (DRP). The principle guidance document is the “NDA 5-year R&D Plan 2019 to 2024”, published in April 2019 and available from the following web link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nda-5-year-research-and-development-plan-2019-to-2024/nda-5-year-rd-plan-2019-to-2024#need-for-rd>

Specifically, the focus of NDA’s strategic R&D portfolio is on:

- helping to shape and underpin NDA’s overall decommissioning strategy for the UK
- delivering innovation across multiple sites
- developing vital technical expertise for the future

Additional information will be made available on the NNL web site at the following URL:

[www.nnl.co.uk/ndabursary](http://www.nnl.co.uk/ndabursary)

- If there is enough demand, we will run a series of conference calls with each of the theme leads in mid to late September, shortly before the call closes. Please check out the site listed for more information.

### **Assessment Criteria**

Proposals will be assessed by a group of nuclear industry specialists using the following assessment criteria.

1. *Strategic fit* – how does the proposal complement life cycle plans across the NDA estate?

The proposal must show how the research will link into the lifetime plan of more than one site in the NDA estate. If your proposal is primarily aimed at delivering a benefit to skills in one of the named areas, then you must show how that skill will be utilised by the NDA or its Site Licence Companies (SLCs). Skills are at least as important as the technical aspects of the project and an assessment of how the project will support skills will form a major part of NDA’s decision on the suitability of the project.

2. *Economic* – how does the proposal encourage cost reduction or add value across the estate?

If possible, your proposal should indicate the cost savings, benefits or value of any new IP that the NDA or its SLCs will gain. The NDA is particularly keen to support research from low TRL to mid TRL and this is a key differentiator from the SLC’s own R&D programmes. Cost savings and benefits to lifetime plans could come from the reduction of the hazard potential or acceleration of plans to deal with materials and wastes within the NDA estate. Additionally, you can show how your proposal underpins strategic decision making either by the NDA, its SLCs or the regulators. Please ensure that you show the value of any additional research that will be linked into your proposal (e.g. from research councils).

3. *Skills and Capabilities* – how does the proposal complement the NDA people and skills strategy?

See the link (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nda-5-year-research-and-development-plan-2019-to-2024/nda-5-year-rd-plan-2019-to-2024#need-for-rd>). The PhD bursary call names six thematic areas that are necessary to meet the needs of the NDA and its SLCs. The proposal needs to show how the current level of skills and capability within the area that matches your research will be changed and how that change will benefit the NDA or its SLCs. For a list of the current NDA funded PhD research projects please see the following site: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nda-direct-research-portfolio-drp-projects-quarterly-update>.

4. *Quality of research* – how is the proposal creative and innovative, addressing key research challenges? The proposal must demonstrate that research of the highest quality will be undertaken by a world-leading team. The research programme should be ambitious, creative and innovative, addressing key research challenges and aiming to increase the fundamental understanding in your area. It should clearly state why the challenges are ambitious; applicants should set the proposed research in context in terms of the current state of knowledge and other work underway in the field.

5. *Impact of research* – how will you ensure that the maximum impact of the research is realised? The proposal must demonstrate how the results of the research will be deployed within the NDA estate. Clearly state what involvement will be required from the NDA and its SLCs, or other industry partners, to apply the results. Basic research is encouraged, particularly where there is an opportunity to increase TRL over the lifetime of the project, and to the point where an SLC might wish to support with follow-on applied R&D funding.

Further background information can be found on the websites of the SLCs. The following links provide a starting point for obtaining relevant guidance on NDA estate issues (other relevant documents are available for the respective SLC organisations):

- Sellafield Research Needs:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/752392/Sellafield\\_Medium\\_and\\_Long\\_Term\\_Research\\_Needs\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752392/Sellafield_Medium_and_Long_Term_Research_Needs_2018.pdf)
- Sellafield corporate plan:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/627566/SEL11098\\_corporate-plan\\_web.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627566/SEL11098_corporate-plan_web.pdf)
- NDA owned sites including; LLWR, Dounreay, Winfrith & MAGNOX sites, please consult the relevant sections of the NDA business plan:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/790526/NDABusinessPlan2019-2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/790526/NDABusinessPlan2019-2022.pdf)
- AWE Sustainability Plan (2012-2030):  
<http://www.awe.co.uk/app/uploads/2014/07/SustainabilityPlan-2012-2030.pdf>
- AWE decommissioning plan:  
<http://www.onr.org.uk/awestrategy.pdf>
- EDF Strategy:  
<https://www.edfenergy.com/about/sustainability-the-better-plan/ambitions/nuclear>
- RWM published Science and Technology Plan  
<https://rwm.nda.gov.uk/publication/science-and-technology-plan-ndarwm121/>

### **International R&D collaboration**

NDA is keen to work with international organisations to share knowledge and experience to help it achieve its mission. NDA will welcome complementary proposals for collaborative R&D that is complimentary to the bursary call. For examples of international collaboration projects supported by NDA, please follow this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nda-5-year-research-and-development-plan-2019-to-2024/nda-5-year-rd-plan-2019-to-2024#international-collaboration>

### **Facilities access**

Facilities access is a key part of NDA research strategy (2019-2024). As indicated in the call, NDA will welcome complimentary proposals to access specialist national facilities (such as facilities capable of handling radioactive materials) for nuclear R&D. This is discussed in the NDA strategy, see here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nda-5-year-research-and-development-plan-2019-to-2024/nda-5-year-rd-plan-2019-to-2024#university-interactions-lot-a>

## Selection Process

The following process will be used to assess proposals:

1. All valid proposals must be submitted using the application form available from the NNL website, [www.nnl.co.uk](http://www.nnl.co.uk). All fields in the application form must be completed according to the instructions.
2. Proposals should indicate **one** of the thematic areas (A-E) that best identifies the area of greatest potential impact for the research. Proposals that fall outside of these five themes should be submitted against the open theme (F).
3. All proposals must be submitted online by 15:00 on **the date highlighted in the call**. Proposals submitted after this time will not be accepted.
4. Further information on the scheme the assessment criteria and selection process are also available by contacting Dr Mark Bankhead directly ([mark.bankhead@nnl.co.uk](mailto:mark.bankhead@nnl.co.uk)).
5. Proposals will be assessed by a group of nuclear industry specialists, who will make a recommendation to the NDA. The assessment will be based on the technical merits of the proposal using the criteria outlined above and the cost and evidence of leverage stated on the application form.
6. It is expected that at least one proposal will be supported from within each of the thematic areas.
7. All applicants will receive a letter stating whether the proposal:
  - a. was successful and will be funded,
  - b. was thought to be of value by the reviewers but may be more appropriate for specific SLC funding than the NDA bursary scheme,
  - c. was thought to be of value but could not be funded due to the limited funds available
  - d. failed to provide sufficient justification against one or more of the criteria,

Detailed feedback on unsuccessful proposals will be provided on request.

### **Practical information**

Applicants should be aware that NDA may wish to publish the summaries of successful bursary projects (either on the NDA web site or in NDA publications or reports as applicable).

NDA has contracted NNL to be industrial supervisors of the Bursary and Case Award students they are funding. For each student:

- A project supervisor will be appointed from within the NNL. This supervisor will be expected to make a number of visits to the student annually (at least 1 per-year) to check on progress. The NNL supervisor will report progress to the NDA. In addition, the NNL industrial supervisor will be on call to answer any student queries.
- Progress reports must be submitted to NNL in accordance with the contractual terms and conditions.
- A seminar will be held annually, where all of the NDA funded students will have the opportunity to present their projects to the NDA and industrial stakeholders. The academic supervisor will also be invited to attend. The seminar is an excellent opportunity for the students to raise the profile of their work and to create contacts who may both assist in giving focus/direction and in offering employment in the future.
- An invite will be sent for a group visit, with other students studying in a similar topic area, either to a nuclear site or a suitable location, to see something of interest and/or meet with industrial stakeholders, this will typically happen around Aug - Oct.
- A 1:1 meeting will be held annually with the NNL industrial supervisor at a nuclear site to see something of interest and/or meet with industrial stakeholders, this will typically happen around Sept - Dec. Alternatively, annually a group meeting may be arranged involving industrial supervisors and PhD students within a specific programme theme.

Additional travel and subsistence costs for students attending these sessions will not be provided by either NDA or NNL and should be accounted for within the budget estimate of the proposal submission.

### **Contractual requirements and Terms and Conditions**

All PhD awards under the scheme are to be placed under the NNL standard university contract. A copy of this contract is available on the website). It is requested that any applicant confirms with their contracts department that the T&C's are acceptable prior to submitting the application. NNL manages university contracts on behalf of the NDA with NDA T&C's flowing down to individual contracts.

Please contact [mark.bankhead@nnl.co.uk](mailto:mark.bankhead@nnl.co.uk) for further information.