**Connected Waters Leverhulme Doctoral Programme**

**Student led applications for an October 2025 start**

**What is a Connected Waters student-led studentship?**

* Students **work on a research project they have come up with themselves**.
* They will be guided in this work by an **expert academic supervisory team**.
* The project may also involve working with a **collaborative partner** (for example, a business, charity or think tank) who provides researchers with access to data, equipment or participants for a study, additional funding for their studentship, or an additional supervisor.

**What are we looking for?**

* Interesting research ideas that fall within the remit of the [Connected Waters](https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/connected-waters/) programme. This programme aims to develop a deeper, holistic understanding of the interactions between humans and the environment to support sustainable solutions to the environmental challenges affecting our river, lake, wetland, and groundwater ecosystems.
* A good match between applicant researchers and their proposed university (Roehampton or Cranfield) and supervisors.
* We are **especially keen to receive applications** from individuals from [underrepresented backgrounds](https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/connected-waters/how-to-apply/) for a Masters plus PhD scholarship.

**How do I get started?**

* If you have a research topic you want to work on, first **identify the academic at either Roehampton or Cranfield University** with whom you wish to work, making sure that your research topic comes within the remit of the [Connected Waters](https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/connected-waters/) Leverhulme Doctoral Programme. Contact that academic - your proposed supervisor - directly to discuss working with them. Their support for your application is critical, not only in terms of providing you with guidance on your research proposal, but also because they are required to provide a supporting statement for your application as a whole.
* If, after talking to your proposed supervisor, they are supportive of working with you, begin to draft your proposal in consultation with them (see guidance notes below).
* Please ensure that you fulfil the general entry criteria for the University that the scholarship will be registered to (either [Roehampton](https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/study/academic-areas/graduate-school/degrees/) or [Cranfield](https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/study/application-guide/entry-requirements)).
* Scholars must be registered as full-time PhD students (unless the Leverhulme Trust has given express permission for part-time registration). Scholars will be subject to the terms and conditions applying to doctoral students within the host institution where they are registered. For Scholars applying to be based at the University of Roehampton, please see details [here](https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/study/academic-areas/graduate-school/degrees/).
* Scholars may not receive funds which would duplicate those provided by the Leverhulme award, but they may apply for or receive additional funding for their research and/or training costs.
* Complete the online application form for either [Roehampton](https://roehamptonacuk.elluciancrmrecruit.com/Apply/Account/Login) or [Cranfield (PhD in Water)](https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/research-opportunities) dependent on where the project will be registered. The deadline to apply for a scholarship based at either Roehampton University or Cranfield University is **Thursday 6th February 2025 at 4pm**.
* Complete the CONNECT cover form. In the ‘project applied for’ box write ‘student led competition’ and the title of your project.
* Attach your project proposal to your application together with your personal statement and the Connect cover form. Applicants for projects registered at Roehampton University - please note that the proposal, Connect cover sheet and personal statement should be added under the 'supplementary documents' tab in the online application.
* Your proposed supervisor must write a supporting statement. We will ask them for this directly.
* Please note you are only permitted to submit ONE application for a student-led studentship beginning in 2025 at EITHER Roehampton OR Cranfield university

**Guidance for your research proposal**

You must discuss your research proposal with your proposed supervisor before submitting your application. However, it is your responsibility to write your own research proposal, that is, it must not be written by anyone else, such as your supervisor or by using Artificial Intelligence. Past experience shows that it can be easy to detect a proposal that has been written, or even partly written, by a supervisor rather than the applicant. If this appears to be the case, your proposal may receive a lower score or may be excluded from the competition altogether. You should approach your proposal as an opportunity to show that you have begun to explore an important area of study, and that your research has the potential to challenge and develop that area. It is also important to demonstrate that you can express your ideas in clear and precise English, in such a way that someone who is an academic, but not a specialist in your subject area, can understand.

Please structure your research proposal as follows

Research proposal title

Proposed supervisor

Research proposal abstract or summary (400 words maximum)

Detailed research proposal (1600 words maximum - does not include title, abstract or references/ bibliography).

Your proposal should follow this structure:

Research background and questions;

The research methods you will use;

Your proposed timeline;

Proposed impact.

What ethical considerations are raised by your research project, and how do you plan to address these?

A bibliography/ references for your research proposal (not included in the word limit)

Consider covering the following points:

• The key areas/issues covered by the project, and the research problems or questions you intend to address and why; How are these relevant to the aims of the Connected Waters Leverhulme Doctoral Programme?

• The research context within which those problems or questions are located;

• The particular contribution that you hope to make to the existing knowledge and understanding in this area, explaining why your research is important, and noting its relevance to, and potential impact for, non-academic beneficiaries, as appropriate;

• The methods and critical approaches that you plan to use, and the sources for these, if appropriate;

• If relevant, how the proposed research relates to what you have studied already (where there is overlap between your Masters dissertation and your doctoral research, you should demonstrate how the project will go further, and state the added value of continuing to research in this area);

• How the research project will develop over the period of the award (e.g. key stages, timetable); and,

• How this research relates to your eventual career aims

**Competition selection criteria**

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| **Criterion** | **Definition** |
| Quality and feasibility of proposal  (40%) | * Research question clearly outlined and answerable * Topic fits with aims of ‘Connected Waters’ * Project located within existing literature and research * Research has potential to generate significant new knowledge * Research methods clearly described and appropriate for the task * Timetable plausible and project completable within the time available * Necessary evidence/data either available or collectible |
| Interdisciplinary and impact potential of proposal  (10%) | * Some element of interdisciplinarity * Some attention given to the potential impact/use of the research beyond academia |
| Preparedness and potential of applicant  (25%) | * Ability to communicate purpose and method, including in personal statement * Basic grounding in substantively relevant discipline * Enthusiasm of supervisor’s supporting statement * Evidence of achievement, progression and/or potential in studies to date |
| Quality of local research environment, including supervisory expertise  (25%) | * Supervisory team offers expertise in both substance and methods of proposal * Supervisory team offers combination of experience and training in supervision * Researcher will be connected to wider peer network, within and/or beyond host department, school, or university |