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MRC London Intercollegiate Doctoral Training Programme (MRC LID) – Information for Supervisors

MRC LID Studentship CASE Conversion

[MRC CASE studentship awards](#) can be offered through the DTP by converting standard DTP studentship awards to iCASE awards.

Industrial CASE awards provide students with experience of collaborative research with a non-academic partner. They also:

- strengthen and develop collaboration and partnerships between ROs and non-academic partner organisations
- offer outstanding students an experience of at least two distinct research cultures
- provide access to a wider-than-usual range of technology, facilities and expertise
- enable the student to spend a period of time with the non-academic partner (usually no less than three months over the lifetime of the PhD).

The experience gained, additional training and networking, and the opportunities of participating in a non-academic culture, as well as the enhanced stipend, are likely to make potential CASE projects very attractive to students.

UK-based organisations can be considered as the non-academic partner if they can provide students with distinctive research training and experience not available in an academic setting. Organisations [eligible for UKRI funding](#) (such as NHS Trusts) cannot act as a non-academic partner. Where the non-academic partner is a company, it must have an established UK based research and/or commercial production capability. In exceptional cases, organisations based overseas may be eligible, but only where they can provide the student with an opportunity to gain skills not currently available in the UK.

Conversion should be completed by the start of the research degree study, ideally, or at least within 6 months of a student's initial registration to for maximum planning, experience, and benefit. This also enables there to be integration of the partner in the development of the project and training of the individual.

Non-academic partner support

CASE awards require the non-academic partner to agree to host a student for 3 months FTE of their project (over the course of the PhD), and to support them financially (no financial contributions are required for SME partners).

Non-academic partner support for CASE project collaborations, as set out by MRC, are:

In-kind support

Contributions could include:

- relevant research resources (such as equipment use, research accommodation and office space, expertise and skills, access to data sets and research participants),
- training provision,
- end user contacts and facilitation of research dissemination.

Financial support

- As a measure of its interest and commitment, the non-academic/company partner (if more than 250 employees) must make a contribution to the MRC DTP of a minimum sum of GBP 3,900.00 per annum for the full length of the studentship once the project has been converted to iCASE. This contribution will support the training of the student and support the MRC DTP Programme.
- As per MRC Guidance GBP 1,400.00 pa will be awarded to the student's consumables budget (in addition to the standard studentship RTSG and travel/conference allowance) and GBP 2,500.00 pa will be awarded to the student's stipend (in addition to the standard RCUK studentship stipend rate paid by MRC LID) in recognition of the extra responsibilities associated with collaborative studentships.
- SMEs (less than 250 employees) are not expected to make this financial contribution. Instead, where an SME is the CASE partner these costs will be covered by MRC LID.

The MRC mandates a cumulative period of no less than three months spent working in the facilities of the industrial collaborator. This 3-month period can be at any point during the studentship and may consist of a number of shorter visits if appropriate – all associated costs to be covered by the partner).

To note: where a CASE project involves` a student requiring a visa to study in the UK there will need to be discussion between all parties to ensure that studentship requirements are met within Home Office student visa limitations. This includes involvement from MRC LID and key contacts (student immigration and Registry) at the student's primary institution.

For planning & consideration

In the first instance, the supervisory team should make MRC LID aware of their intention to convert a standard studentship to a CASE award. The MRC LID team needs to have the following information for the MRC LID Board:

- Who the potential CASE partner/s is, with a short paragraph about them and a link to their website.
- Whether the potential CASE partner is an SME.
- The specific, identifiable contribution the CASE partner will make to the research training of the student ie the specific requirements/benefits to the student which would not be met under a standard (non-CASE) collaboration between the institution, the student, and the non-academic partner. (If the student would be carrying out the same/similar research project and training experience without the industrial collaborator then it probably does not merit a conversion.)
- Details about supervisor suitability and the research environment at the CASE partner. (Ideally, the non-academic partner should provide two supervisors in addition to the two academic supervisors noted in the project bid. UKRI requires the DTP to be sure that the non-academic partners 'have strong regulatory, supervisory and other policies in place to ensure the continuity of the studentship'.)
- And - only where a CASE conversion is being considered after a student's registration in to their research degree programme - a clear plan of how the CASE award will be squeezed in to the remain time on the MRC LID award scheme.

The MRC LID admin team will liaise with the Board for approval, then follow up, and where necessary, provide further details on the expectations and ethos of UKRI and MRC LID with regards to these schemes.

(When considering suitability for conversion to CASE the MRC LID Board will evaluate the quality of the proposed collaboration with a non-industrial partner. Examples of questions they may ask include: What is the added value of the research collaboration? What is the nature of the commitment from the partner organisation? What additional training or developmental opportunities will arise through the collaboration for the student? Will the partner institution offer distinctive forms of experience in areas which would be unobtainable without the partner? How will training opportunities be structured? Is there an opportunity for the student to complete a placement as part of their PhD with the partner organisation?)

Once the supervisory team has completed discussions with MRC LID (and received any additional background information), the MRC LID board would expect supervisors to discuss details of the CASE conversion with their non-academic partner/s: to agree, in principle, to the funding and intellectual property rights (IPR) implications, and to work through appropriate details of the ways in which the partner organisation(s) anticipate realising mutual benefit as partners in the collaboration.

This should be followed up by a letter of support to MRC LID from an appropriate person at the non-academic organisation. Only at that point will the MRC LID administration team liaise with JREO (at SGUL) or the Legal team (at LSHTM) to start drafting the CASE agreement.

The [Russell Group Studentship template](#) (part of the Lambert toolkit) is used by SGUL JREO and LSHTM Legal for these as CASE projects require a formal agreement between the non-academic partner, the academic institution, and the student. The agreement will cover the expectations of work to be done and support to be provided to the student, as well as outlining intellectual property rights (IPR). This should be agreed and signed as soon as possible, and preferably before a student starts.

For further information about iCASE options please contact MRC LID Board members Alexis Bailey (at SGUL) or Ian Douglas (at LSHTM).