CREDS interdisciplinary energy demand studentships call: Guidance document

## Overview

**Call type: full application for doctoral studentships**

**Closing date: 4pm, 29 October 2021**

**Positions available:** Up to eight fully funded doctoral studentships.

**How to apply:** This is a single stage process, open to applicants who intend to be doctoral students at UK universities that form part of the consortium of the Centre for Research into Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS). These are listed in the [Annex](#_Annex).

**Assessment process:** Full proposals will be reviewed by independent, experienced supervisors of doctoral students in fields related to the proposed topic, and final decisions made by an independent moderating panel.

This process for CREDS funding support is separate from, and additional to, the process for admission to the proposed host university.

### Timeline

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| **Dates** | **Activity** | |
| 4th August 2021 | Call issued |
| 17th September 2021 | Webinar |
| 29th October | Applications close |
| w/c 17th January 2022 | Panel meeting |
| 28th January 2022 | Applicants notified |
| September/ October 2022 | Start date |

### Contacts

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## Background

Energy demand reduction has been a key factor in the reduction of UK carbon dioxide emissions since 2004. Major further reductions are possible and will be needed, as part of a transformation of the energy system in a net-zero carbon society, to deliver the goals of the Paris Agreement and UK carbon budgets. Moreover, a low carbon energy system will be increasingly reliant upon inflexible and variable electricity generation, and therefore demand will need to become more flexible.

These challenges have far-reaching implications for technology, business models, social practices and policy. UK Research and Innovation and its constituent Research Councils recognise the value and importance of continued inter-disciplinary research in this area. Through the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the UKRI Energy Programme has funded the Centre for Research into Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS) for the period April 2018 to March 2023.

CREDS is a large inter-disciplinary research programme and acts as the hub for energy demand research in UK universities. The consortium extends across more than 20 universities and has headquarters at the University of Oxford. It leads whole systems work on energy demand in the UK, collaborating with a wider community both at home and internationally. It aims to:

* deliver globally-leading research on energy demand,
* secure much greater impact for energy demand research and
* champion the importance of energy demand for delivering environmental, social and economic goals.

EPSRC, as part of supporting doctoral research in the UK, provides funding to Doctoral Training Partnerships in UK universities. Where research income relates to large, multi-institutional awards, such as CREDS, studentships are ring-fenced for that award and may be held in any of the award’s partner universities.

Through this process the EPSRC Doctoral Training Partnership award to the University of Oxford (grant reference EP/T517811/1), has funding for up to eight doctoral studentships linked to CREDS, and this number may be increased if additional funding is awarded by EPSRC. These awards may be held in any CREDS institution (see [Annex](#_Annex) for list).

## The Studentship Competition

Through this call, CREDS invites applications for inter-disciplinary doctoral energy demand research studentships from suitably qualified individuals. Applications will include the candidate’s CV and a research proposal. They must have the support of a prospective host supervisor ([see below](#_Information_for_host)) employed in a university that is a participant in the CREDS consortium.

CREDS will operate the application process. Applicants may propose support for research on any topic relevant to [‘End Use Energy Demand’ as defined by UKRI](https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/researchareas/energyefficiency/). The research should be interdisciplinary.

CREDS defines ‘energy demand’ broadly to include any driver of demand for energy services, the efficiency of delivery of those services, the temporal or spatial patterns of energy use and/or the fuels used, as well as the technical, behavioural, social, economic and/or policy issues associated with energy demand. It includes research into the practices and behaviours that produce the demand for energy services, energy efficiency technologies deployed at the point of energy use, non-technical measures to reduce demand, technologies and other measures to increase the flexibility of energy demand, and measures taken to implement the use of low and zero carbon energy fuels and energy vectors. It includes research in all energy using sectors including the built environment, transport and industry.

The proposed research may therefore potentially interact with parts of the existing CREDS research programme that is described on the [CREDS website](https://www.creds.ac.uk/what-we-do/). Applicants are encouraged to seek and explain synergies with that programme. Successful applicants will be encouraged to participate in CREDS networking activities and those of any successor consortium funded by UKRI for the period after March 2023.

## Funding eligibility

Successful applicants will need to have been accepted as a student at a UK university that is within the CREDS consortium at the time that the research commences. The current list of CREDS universities is in the Annex. The timescales of this application process are intended to allow parallel application to these universities. This application is separate from any admission process of the proposed host institution.

Applicants will hold, or expect to achieve, by 30 September 2022, a good undergraduate degree (at least a 2:1) or a Master's degree from a UK university or equivalent overseas academic qualifications. The degree must be appropriate to the proposed area of study. The awards are subject to the UKRI international scholars’ rules, which allows up to 30% of funds (in this case a maximum of two students in 2022/23) to be recruited from overseas. In the event that more than two of the best 8 applications come from international applicants, the strongest two will be funded. Subject to this, the strongest eight eligible applicants will be funded.

## Application content

Applications should contain the following sections:

* a [completed application form](https://www.creds.ac.uk/creds-interdisciplinary-energy-demand-studentships-call)
* a research proposal (up to six pages) which sets out the proposed research topic, the aims of the research, the background to it, the relevant existing literature and the research methods proposed;
* a two-page CV;
* a statement (up to 2 pages) from the prospective primary supervisor about supervisory and training arrangements and any other information relevant to assessing the quality of the academic environment;
* the names of two academic referees, able to comment on the applicant’s academic ability and potential, of whom one should normally be the applicant’s undergraduate or Master’s Degree tutor.

Submissions should be in 'Arial' or other San Serif font of size 11 or higher, and margin size of at least 2cm. All of the sections should be combined into a single PDF file for submission.

Applications should be sent by email to [credsadmin@ouce.ox.ac.uk](mailto:credsadmin@ouce.ox.ac.uk), including ‘EPSRC Studentship application’ in the email header, to arrive by **4pm on 29th October 2021**.

## Information for host institutions and supervisors

Supervisory arrangements should conform to the normal standards of the host institution. Joint supervision arrangements are welcome, including joint or secondary supervisors from other institutions if appropriate. Supervisory arrangements should be robust against changes expected with the full 3.5 years of the studentship. Applications are limited to one prospective student per primary supervisor. Studentships will outlive the current CREDS award (which ends in March 2023), and therefore there is no requirement for any supervisor to be an investigator or researcher in CREDS. However, proposed supervisors should be engaged in energy demand research and encourage successful applicants to be active in CREDS events and those of any successor consortium funded by UKRI.

As set out above, the application should include a statement from the prospective primary supervisor about supervisory and training arrangements and any other information relevant to assessing the quality of the academic environment. Prospective supervisors should bear in mind that this will form part of the application to be assessed in a competitive process.

Once the applications are received we may contact prospective supervisors to seek two nominations for appropriate independent reviewers.

Funding is subject to EPSRC rules for Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP). Studentship values are calculated on the basis of current costs of a UKRI studentship in the Oxford EPSRC DTP. This allows for the UKRI stipend (currently £15,609 per year) lasting 3.5 years, three years of university fees and an allowance for research costs. The current value of each award is £79,498. We expect that this will constitute full funding in most institutions. However, fee levels and charging practices differ across institutions and higher stipends are payable in London. We therefore cannot guarantee that the award will cover the full costs in all cases. To the extent the award does not cover the actual fees (which differ between universities), the relevant UKRI stipend for 3.5 years and reasonable research costs, the host university, not the student, will be expected to meet these additional costs.

The studentship will be conditional on the host university accepting the student and paying the minimum UKRI stipend for that institution, as well as reasonable research costs. Arrangements will be made for financial transfers from the Oxford DTP to host universities. The host university will be responsible for creating and maintaining a Je-S studentship details record for the student and access to this record will need to be given to the University of Oxford as grant holder.

## Assessing the Applications

Applications will be judged against the following criteria:

* academic qualifications of the candidate and their suitability to undertake research on their chosen topic;
* academic quality of the research proposal;
* relevance of the research proposed to UK energy demand priorities;
* the extent of inter-disciplinarity; and
* the quality of the academic environment in which the research would be conducted, including the quality and scope of supervision offered and opportunities for training.

The applications will be assessed against the criteria above by a panel appointed by the CREDS Executive Committee. Each application will be assessed by a pair of assessors selected according to the disciplinary mix in the proposal. The final ranking will be decided by the assessment panel as a whole.

Decisions will be reached by 28th January 2022. The studentship will be conditional on the host university accepting the student.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The long-term strength of the UK research base depends on harnessing available talent and UKRI has developed ambitious goals for [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)](https://www.ukri.org/our-work/supporting-healthy-research-and-innovation-culture/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/). In line with the UK Research and Innovation Diversity Principles, CREDS has adopted an [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan](https://www.creds.ac.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-plan/). Applications are particularly encouraged from members of groups under-represented in the UK energy research community.

CREDS is committed to supporting the research community in the diverse ways a research career can be built. This includes career breaks, support for people with caring responsibilities, flexible working and alternative working patterns. With this in mind, we welcome applications to undertake research part-time and/or through flexible working arrangements.

## Additional information

To assist potential applicants, CREDS will hold a webinar on the application process on 17th September 2021. Details will be provided on the CREDS website in advance.

## How to apply

Applications should be sent by email to [credsadmin@ouce.ox.ac.uk](mailto:credsadmin@ouce.ox.ac.uk), including ‘EPSRC Studentship application’ in the header. Applications should be received by **4pm on 29th October 2021**.

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* Sarah Higginson, Research Knowledge Exchange Officer, CREDS ([sarah.higginson@ouce.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.higginson@ouce.ox.ac.uk))

## Documentation check list

A single PDF file of the application, containing the following:

* a completed application form;
* a research proposal (6 pages maximum);
* CV (2 pages maximum);
* statement from the proposed supervisor (2 pages maximum)
* the names of two academic referees.

# Annex

## The CREDS Consortium

The CREDS consortium consists of the universities active in CREDS research, which have collectively agreed to implement the CREDS research programme. The list changes from time to time. Eligibility for this call will depend on the list on 1st October 2022. The current list is below.

Coventry University

King’s College London

Lancaster University

Liverpool John Moores University

London School of Economics

Loughborough University

Ulster University

University College London

University of Birmingham

University of Cambridge

University of Edinburgh

University of Leeds

University of Manchester

University of Oxford

University of Plymouth

University of Reading

University of Sheffield

University of Surrey

University of Sussex

University of York

We currently expect that before October 2022, the University of Stirling and the University of Strathclyde will become consortium members and that none of the universities listed above will leave.