



lapetus Studentship Competition 2024-2025

Applicant Guidance for Prospective Students

1st November 2024 - V1

1. All applications are made via an online form. A Word template is provided so that applicants may edit their responses in advance, and applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their application with the primary supervisors. International applicants *must* contact the supervisor in advance, in order to be considered for sponsorship, which is required to apply for the project. The assessment criteria used to evaluate applications are given in [Appendix 3](#) of this document and, again, we strongly encourage applicants to use these criteria to structure their answers. **The candidate must complete the lapetus online Studentship Competition Application Form on the lapetus website by Friday 3rd January 2025 at 12 midday (GMT) for the one project for which they wish to apply.** Prospective Students must also complete the online Studentship Competition EDI form. The data in this form will only be used for general statistical and monitoring purposes and will in no way be taken into account when assessing your application. Those shortlisting and recruiting will not see this information.
2. The lapetus Manager will send anonymized applications to the supervisory teams of each project on Wednesday 8th January 2025 for initial longlisting for each project. Using the application forms only, supervisors will notify lapetus of up to three candidates they would like to consider.
The application form requests information from those from underrepresented groups in order to identify applicants who are eligible for the Widening Participation Scheme (WPS). The DTP aims to give up to 30% of interview places to those eligible for the WPS but who would not have been shortlisted initially by the host organisation. Information regarding eligibility for the WPS will NOT be passed on to supervisors at the longlisting stage.
3. A combined longlist of applicants will be collated on Monday 20th January 2025. The longlisted applicants will include those who are part of the WPS. Longlisted applicants will be invited to put in a full application to the degree-awarding institution. Applicants will also be asked to send their CVs (no longer than 2 pages) and transcripts to the Primary Supervisor by Wednesday 22nd January 2025. To avoid unconscious bias during the application process, applicants are advised not to include a photograph, and to write their CV without gender specific pronouns. Applicants' referees will be contacted directly by lapetus.
4. All HOs need to ensure that the correct application documents are provided by prospective students and that they are subject to the HO standard fee status assessment process. The PhD application must be available by **Monday 10th February 2025** at the latest for evaluation.
5. HOs nominate their highest ranked applicants to the lapetus final interviews. The full nomination includes:
 - a) lapetus project description
 - b) lapetus Studentship Application Form with completed supervisor nomination statement
 - c) 2-page current CV - candidates should not include a photograph and should write without using gender -specific pronouns.
 - d) Full transcripts of qualifications.
 - e) 2 references on the lapetus proforma

Further Information

Professor Philip Stephens - DTP Director

Email: philip.stephens@durham.ac.uk

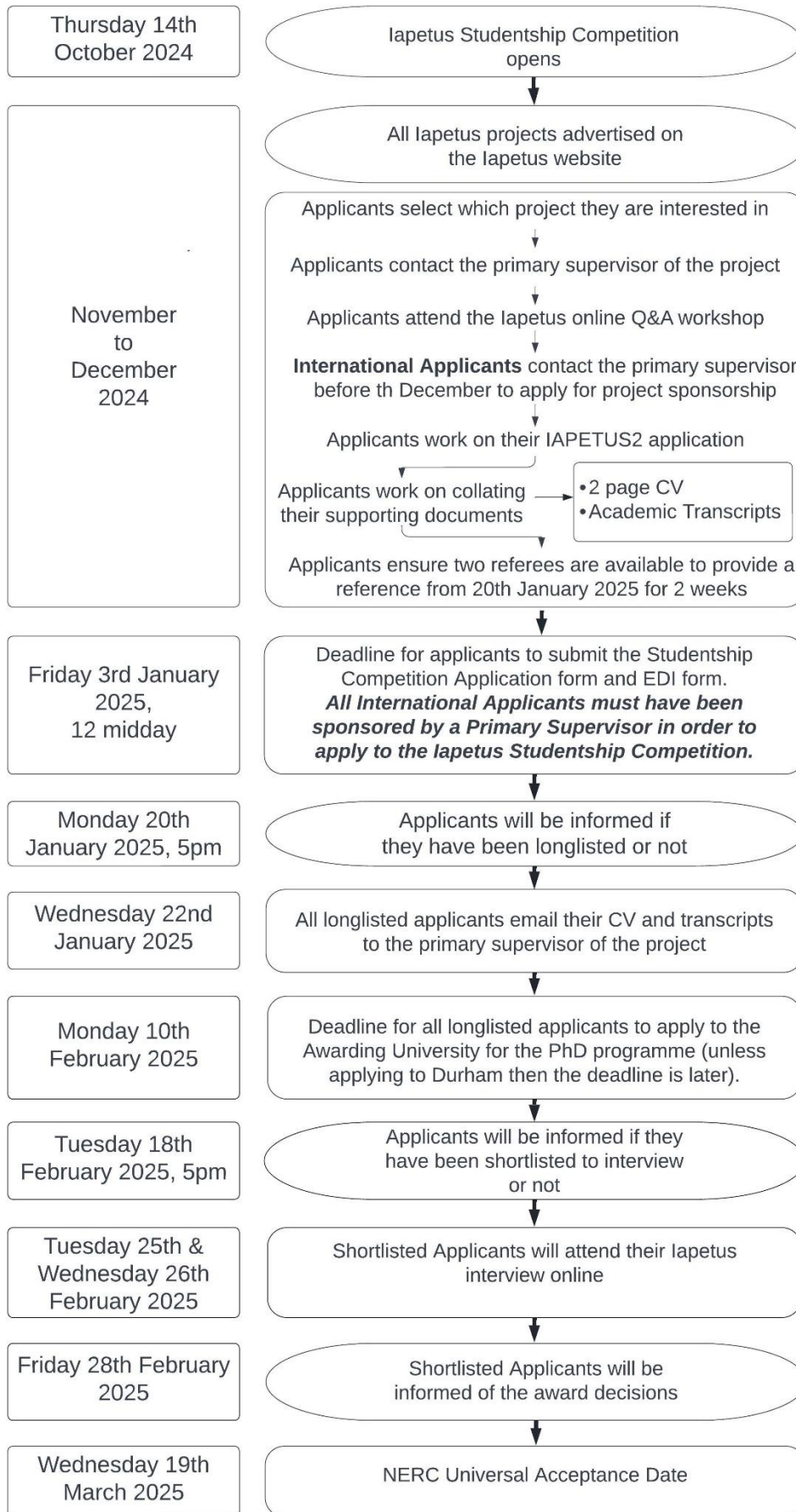
Jennifer Gadouleau - DTP Manager

Email: contact.iapetus@durham.ac.uk

Appendix 1 - Timeline

Dates	Activity / Milestone
Thursday 14 th November 2024	Iapetus Studentship Competition Applications open
Monday 9 th December 2024	Deadline for international applicants to contact the primary supervisor to be considered for sponsorship
Monday 16 th December 2024, 5pm	International applicants will be informed of if they have been sponsored
Friday 3 rd January 2025, 12pm	Deadline for all applicants to apply for a studentship
Monday 20 th January 2025	Applicants will be informed if they have been longlisted
Wednesday 22 nd January 2025, 5 pm	Longlisted applicants to send their 2-page CV and transcripts to the primary supervisor of the project
Monday 10 th February 2025	Deadline for longlisted applicants to apply to the Awarding University for the PhD
Tuesday 18 th February 2025 4pm	Applicants will be informed if they have been shortlisted for interview
Tuesday 18 th February 2025 4pm	Invitation to Interviews sent out to all nominated candidates
Tuesday 25 th February 2025 9am-5pm	Interviews of nominated candidates
Wednesday 26 th February 2025 9am-12pm	Interviews of nominated candidates
Wednesday 26 th February 2025 2pm-4pm	Iapetus Studentships & Scholarship panel convenes
Friday 28 th February 2025	All nominated candidates notified by Iapetus of award decisions
Wednesday 19 th March 2025 12 noon	Deadline for selected candidates to accept or decline their award offer. (NERC Universal Acceptance Date)
Thursday 20 th March 2025 onwards	Reserve offers made (where required)

Full details of the competition process are shown in the flowchart below.



Appendix 2 - Iapetus DTP Host Organizations

Partner Organization	Departments/Schools
British Antarctic Survey	All staff active within NERC's disciplinary remit.
British Geological Survey	All staff active within NERC's disciplinary remit.
UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology	All staff active within NERC's disciplinary remit.
Durham University	All staff active within NERC's disciplinary remit.
Glasgow University	Engineering Geography & Earth Sciences Mathematics & Statistics Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health & Comparative Medicine
Heriot-Watt University	School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society
Newcastle University	All staff active within NERC's disciplinary remit
St Andrews University	Earth & Environmental Sciences Centre for Biological Diversity, and relevant parts of the Biomedical Sciences Research Complex Geography & Sustainable Development
Stirling University	Biological and Environmental Sciences

Appendix 3 - Student Assessment Criteria

Marking Scheme for selection of applicants for Iapetus interview based upon documents received including CV, nomination form and references.

Each criterion is marked out of 5 by Panel Reviewers and is then weighted to reflect their respective importance to the total score for each application.

Scoring Descriptors:

0	No Evidence
1	Limited Evidence
2	Good Evidence
3	Very Good Evidence
4	Excellent Evidence across multiple materials*
5	Outstanding Evidence across multiple materials*

* Multiple materials refers to evidence gleaned from the application, the CV and the references.

Criteria

All eligible nominations for studentships will be assessed by the Iapetus Studentships Panel against all of the following criteria. Sections indicated below refer to the nomination form filled in by the student and potential supervisors. Potential supervisors should be aware of issues of unconscious bias when filling out forms, and be appropriately considerate of a candidate's background and career trajectory.

Criterion	Weighting
<p>I. Background</p> <p>This criterion focusses on the candidate's ability to conduct high-quality doctoral research in the environmental sciences. Reviewers should look for evidence of the candidate's interest in the research topic, and demonstration that the candidate has a clear interest in the project itself. Supporting information for example might come from section 3.2 of the nomination form, in relation to past research experience and from section 3.3, and in relation to evidence of research into the topic area beyond what is available in the advertised project description.</p> <p>Evidence of a demonstration of initiative in proactively seeking information about the project and research topic and the DTP (in section 3.3 of the nomination form) is also useful. Evidence from sections 3.2-3.4 of an ability to take on responsibilities (not necessarily directly relating to research) and meet deadlines is useful. Evidence of written communication skills from these sections should also be considered when evaluating this criterion.</p> <p>Although at least a 2:1 at undergraduate level is generally required by HOs, other contextual information should be considered in relation to academic qualifications to avoid the potential for unconscious bias. Other evidence of 'research experience' in section 3.2 should be used, for example, for candidates seeking to embark on a research project after graduating some time ago.</p> <p>Contextual information from section 5 of the nomination form can also be used for supporting evidence that the candidate has an appropriate background for carrying out the research project.</p>	10

<p>2. Project Fit Candidates need to demonstrate clearly how their skills, qualifications, experience and interests fit to, and support the project they intend to study. Section 4 provides a specific statement on this criterion. However, reviewers should be careful to assess contextual information (for example in section 3.4 of the form) and to balance past specific experience in relation to the project with more generic research skills. Demonstrations of a candidate’s abilities to pick up new approaches and take initiatives in developing skills should also be considered, for example as illustrated in sections 3.2 and 3.3.</p> <p>A strong application will clearly articulate the candidate’s interests and experience relevant to the project, whilst also outlining their anticipated training and development needs during their studies. Demonstration of a strong motivation to develop new skills may be used to support the assessment of a candidate’s fit to the project. As the purpose of the DTP is to train students in appropriate skills, it should not be assumed that existing experience in a particular method or past activities should outweigh the demonstration of the motivation to find out about new topics, not least because applicants from different backgrounds may have had limited access to facilities or opportunities. Candidates may also be hoping to change career paths based upon new or recent interests and activities. Further information from sections 3.4 and 5 of the nomination form may be useful in evaluating these aspects.</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>3. Future Potential Reviewers should consider the profile of a candidate relative to their current career stage and access to past opportunities.</p> <p>Reviewers will also consider the candidate’s future potential to deliver their specific research project, for example, based on statements in relation to personal skills such as self-discipline and time management. Statements in the nomination form demonstrating confidence in a candidate’s abilities should be balanced in relation to how realistic these statements might be.</p> <p>A candidate’s future career aspirations should be considered, but as the DTP contributes to training in relation to the broader environmental science sector, no preference is given to those wanting to develop an academic or a non- academic career pathway. The key element to consider is a demonstration of a keen interest in the topic and a wish to pursue activities related to this research topic in the future.</p> <p>A strong candidate will demonstrate that they are well equipped to deliver their proposed research project and also able to engage in other related activities and initiatives that will not only support their individual research, but the wider lapetus and/or disciplinary community.</p> <p>Contextual information arising from interviews and other forms of interaction/assessment (section 5 of the form) may provide Reviewers with further useful evidence as to the future trajectory of the candidate.</p>	<p>2</p>

Interviews and Overall Evaluation

All nominees will be interviewed in a single set of panels (see Appendix I) using a set of common questions about their application and PhD. Nominees are requested to ensure that they will be available to interview via Zoom on the advertised dates. These interviews are weighted 40 % in the overall evaluation of the studentships panel, with 60 % coming from the evaluation of the initial nomination.