

Co(l)laboratory Leics
Cohort 1
March-May 2025

**Guidance for Teams
Submitting PhD Project
Proposals**



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1. KEY INFORMATION

All project proposal submissions must be received through our [online PhD proposal submission form](#). There is one form for Research Placement projects and one for PhD projects.

We cannot accept any submissions by email or any other format. Any proposals sent by email will not be considered.

- While development of all Co(l)laboratory project proposals should be a collaborative effort between academic and community partners, it is strongly recommended that an academic team member completes the proposal submission form. This is because we ask for some institutionally specific information that community partners will not know.
- The online form allows you to save your progress and return at a later date.
- An offline copy of the proposal form questions is available to download [HERE](#). This is only to support your team's preparation and we will not accept any proposals that are not submitted through the online form.
- Please be aware of minimum and maximum word counts.
- All word limits include citations.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm on Sunday 18 May 2025

Submission forms will automatically close at the deadline.

All project teams will be notified of outcomes by 30th May 2025.

Peer Reviews

Each PhD project proposal will require 2 complete peer reviews.

Due to the time constraints of Round 1 of Co(l)laboratory Leicestershire funding, peer reviews will be sought after the proposal submission deadline. Peer reviewers will be contacted if the project is successful in being selected for funding. Successful projects will be expected to incorporate any changes recommended by funders before the project commences.

Peer reviewers must be academic colleagues from any higher education institution with relevant subject expertise. We strongly recommended that colleagues from Leicestershire partner universities are approached in the first instance as they will likely be more familiar with local community contexts.

2. OVERVIEW OF CO(L)LABORATORY PHD STUDENTSHIPS

Co(l)laboratory's PhD Research projects are an integral part of our work to create a comprehensive cycle of community engaged research. The Co(l)laboratory programme has been developed based on the principles of responsible, community engaged research, and the latest evidence and best practice in inclusive research approaches.

As a place-based research programme, we are looking for proposals which embody the values of the project and seek to deliver meaningful change for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland communities by addressing locally relevant challenges through rigorous, collaborative research

Co(l)laboratory seeks to remove structural barriers, making research degrees more inclusive and accessible to strong, promising local candidates who otherwise may be excluded from traditional routes into PhD study. Furthermore, this approach also aims to support the growth of more equitable, meaningful partnerships between Leicestershire and Rutland researchers and local community-focused organisations.

In Leicestershire & Rutland , Co(l)laboratory will be funding **3 cohorts** of research projects. Each cohort will comprise **9 PhDs** (3 per institution) and **4 Research Placements**.



Our cohort-based PhD studentship scheme is a boundary pushing initiative involving many hours of specialist development and support work. Each project and its candidate represents an investment of approx. £120,00 by Co(l)laboratory.

3. FUNDING OVERVIEW

Structure

- All PhD projects and their associated studentships are offered as 3-year, fully funding, full-time programmes (plus a 4th, unfunded thesis-pending year). We regret that we are unable to offer part-time PhD Degrees due to funding limitations.
- All candidates are required to take part in Co(l)laboratory's unique training and development programme, as a condition of funding.

Co(l)laboratory PhD Offering

All successful Co(l)laboratory PhD projects receive the following funding:

- All PhD candidates receive the UKRI basic stipend rate for 3 years, paid monthly, in arrears.
- Full payment of tuition fees (approx. £4,700 per year)
- Purchase of a laptop.
- A Research Training and Support Grant of £500 per year. This is to be used towards the candidate's specialist training and development, and research consumables.
- Support payments of £50 per half day for Community Supervisors to support their attendance at essential events such as shortlisting, interviews, induction, and regular project meetings.
- PhD candidates receive full PGR-level access to both their primary and secondary institutions.
- Candidates benefit from extensive, support and training developed and delivered by the Co(l)laboratory team, with direct support from all of our partner institutions' doctoral school equivalents.
- Candidates will undergo training on our programme's bespoke Championing Engaged Research module, created in partnership with the [National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement](#), which aims to develop our researchers into future leaders of community-engaged research.

NOTE: Any project costs in excess of the funding outlined above must be sourced by the project team. Details of any additional funding requirements must be detailed in the proposal submission form.

4. SUPERVISORY TEAM REQUIREMENTS

All PhD project supervisory teams require the following named partners, as a minimum:

A lead Academic Supervisor

An Academic Co-supervisor

Community Supervisor

At least 1 member of a Leicestershire or Rutland based organisation which works with one or more, defined, Leicestershire or Rutland communities.

As a minimum, each project supervisory team must an academic lead and co-supervisor from any two different Leics universities.

- Community Supervisory partners must hold an active, formal position with a Leicestershire or Rutland organisation. This can be paid employment or a long-term voluntary position.
- Community-focused organisations based/operating outside of Leicestershire or Rutland may be named as additional supporting partners but cannot be named as a primary Community Supervisor.
- The role of a Community Supervisor is to provide insight and guidance to the candidate based on their real-world, professional expertise and experience working with relevant communities. They can also provide access to defined communities, data, resources, etc., where relevant.
- Up to 1 additional Community Supervisor may be named on the proposal, if relevant to the needs of the project.
- The lead academic supervisor and academic co-supervisor must be based at different institutions. We will accept any combination of academic supervisors from any of the three partner universities; De Montford University, University of Loughborough, or the University of Leicester.
- Up to 1 additional Academic Co-Supervisor from either De Montford University, University of Loughborough, or the University of Leicester may be named on the proposal, if relevant to the needs of the project.
- Named academic supervisors **MUST** meet their local institutional and departmental supervision regulations. This is non-negotiable.
 - This must be confirmed prior to proposal submission.
 - The eligibility of named academics to take on a new PGR supervision will be checked against local records. If any named academic supervisor on a proposal is not or will not be eligible to take on a supervision by 29th September 2025, the proposal will not be considered.
- Named academic supervisors must receive approval from their line manager in order to be awarded Co(l)laboratory funding for a PhD or Research Placement.

5. WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR IN A PHD RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL?

Project Focus

- Proposals can be based in any academic discipline. The core requirement is that every project must seek to address one or more defined local challenges relevant to the needs of one or more defined communities in Leicestershire and/or Rutland.
- Each proposal must be of appropriate scope for a full, PhD-level research project.
- Projects must have a legitimate academic AND community basis.

We strongly recommend that teams interested in submitting a project proposal explore the profiles of our previous and current PhD research projects to understand the nature and scope of the work we will fund. Each project profile also includes a link to our candidate profiles which allow you to learn more about the kind of people we recruit.

[Explore Our Current PhD Project Profiles](#)

How will proposals be assessed?

All proposals will be assessed by a panel comprising members of the Co(l)laboratory team, academic researchers from De Montford University, University of Loughborough, and the University of Leicester, as well as members of local Community-focused organisations. All proposed will be assessed against the following criteria:

Community Basis | Academic Basis | Potential for Impact | Supervisory Team

Community Basis

- Proposals must have a clear and well-informed grounding in the needs and challenges of one or more defined Leicestershire and/or Rutland communities. We are looking to fund research centred around the nuances of local people and challenges, rather than research that could be carried out anyway and that just happens to be set in Leicestershire and/or Rutland.
- The local challenge(s) which the project seeks to address must be informed by the experience of local communities and/or the practice and experience of the community partner.
- The community context underpinning the proposal must be made explicit. In the interest of fairness, proposals where the connections to community need are based on assumption or left implicit will not be considered.

Academic Basis

- Proposals must demonstrate a strong academic basis for the proposed research project, making it clear how the work intends to make a novel contribution to one or more academic fields.
- Projects must provide an academically robust justification for the proposed methods, and approaches.
- Sufficient detail about the proposed methods and any community-engaged approaches must be provided for their suitability to be judged in relation to the project's rationale, aims, and make-up of the supervisory team.

Potential for Impact

- Projects must explicitly demonstrate a strong potential for the proposed research to deliver genuine, relevant, and meaningful impact to one or more defined Leicestershire and/or Rutland communities.
- The potential impact of a project should be realistic and achievable given the scope of the work and funding available. The panel will be looking for evidence of the named Community Supervisor's input in exploring potential impacts.
- Sufficient detail should be provided to rationalise how such impact would be achieved through the proposed project, highlighting aims for potential outcomes, where relevant.

Supervisory Team

- Each project supervisory team must have an appropriate combination of relevant knowledge, skills, and expertise to guide a PhD Candidate in the defined research activities, and to ensure the project is successful.
- The balance of expertise from academic and community supervisors should be appropriate for the area of focus of the proposed research.
- Each project supervisory team must demonstrate how each member (including any additional named members) has the experience and expertise necessary for the project's success.
- Named academic supervisors **MUST** meet their local intuitional and departmental supervision regulations. This is non-negotiable and must be checked **BEFORE** submission.
- If any named academic supervisor does not meet the necessary supervision regulations the proposal will not be considered.

Additional Considerations

In addition to the criteria mentioned above, the selection panel will also take into account the following when making funding decisions.

- The balance of topics being addressed by projects within each cohort portfolio.
- The institution of the lead academic supervisors. We will fund 3 PhD projects per institution, per cohort. The lead institution is determined by the lead academic supervisor named on the project.

6. RECRUITMENT OF PHD CANDIDATES

A core area of Co(I)laboratory's work is to pilot new, evidence-based recruitment mechanisms, with the aim of creating more inclusive pathways into doctoral research for promising local candidates who might otherwise be excluded from more traditional academic opportunities.

All project teams who are successful in securing Co(I)laboratory funding are expected to engage fully with our approach to PhD candidate recruitment. This is as an essential, mandatory condition of Co(I)laboratory funding.

Applicant Eligibility

- Co(I)laboratory PhD studentships are only open to those eligible for UK Home Student fees. Our funding will not cover overseas student fees and visa sponsorship.
- Those currently employed by DMU, UoL, and LU are not eligible to apply. This does not apply to those in casual employment by any partner university.
- Those who already hold a doctoral degree (including any medical degree awarding the title of Doctor) are not eligible to apply.
- We cannot consider applications from those who wish to conduct a PhD at distance/remotely. Due to the mandatory training requirements and significant community engagement focus of our projects, in-person engagement with the programme is essential.
- No applicant can be given preferential treatment. All candidates must apply through our open, competitive process.
- Applicants who do not meet standard Higher Education minimum qualification criteria of holding a 2.1 undergraduate degree (or 2.2 with a Masters) can still apply.

Recruitment Process

- Candidate recruitment is run centrally by the Co(I)laboratory team.
- Recruitment promotions will target local candidates via hyper local, non-academic channels; primarily social media.
- Support from Community Supervisors is essential to successfully attract strong candidates with relevant skills. Community Supervisors of successful projects will be asked to support in disseminating details of the studentship opportunity through their professional networks.
- All Co(I)laboratory projects are advertised in a job advert-style format which provides a break down of core Co(I)laboratory competencies, as well as project-specific essential and desired competencies.

Project Summaries and Competencies

To help you write an effective project summary and to define appropriate essential and desirable competencies, please see the examples at the links below.

[Example 1](#)

[Example 2](#)

[Example 3](#)

Final project specific competencies may be edited by Co(I)laboratory before advertising. Suggested competencies which can reasonably be learnt or attained throughout the course of the PhD programme will not be included in the final advert.