

Studying for a PhD at the Centre for Aerosol Science (CAS)

Frequently Asked Questions

We hope that the responses to FAQs below will provide you with the answers you need to your questions, but please do contact the CAS administrator by e-mail if you have any further questions at aerosol-science@bristol.ac.uk.

Applying for a Studentship

What's the process for applying and when do I need to apply?

All you need to do is send us your CV and complete the proforma that can be downloaded from the CAS website at:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cdt/aerosol-science/apply/>

Key dates are also indicated on the website. We will then invite you to a recruitment and assessment day at the University of Bristol where you will meet members of CAS, learn a little more about aerosols and have opportunities to ask questions. You will also take part in a team-based activity so we can assess your fit for studying at CAS.

When do I need to specify a PhD project and supervisor? When I apply to CAS?

When you submit the proforma, you can list your preference for specific PhD projects with specific supervisors at a particular institution. This is entirely your choice and you are also welcome to simply list any areas of aerosol science that you have an interest in or a specific institution you prefer to undertake your PhD at. The specific projects that are recruiting in any year can be found on the CAS website at:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cdt/aerosol-science/projects/>

Once you have attended the recruitment and assessment day, you will have an opportunity to talk with the potential PhD supervisors you have selected or we will suggest supervisors who match your interests. If you wish to talk to supervisors for particular projects before the recruitment and assessment day, we can also put you in contact with them, just e-mail the CAS administrator.

What are the areas of aerosol science that CAS works in?

The areas of aerosol science that CAS work in and that you can specify on your application include:

- Basic aerosol processes (e.g. microphysics of aerosol processes, fundamental science, aerosol chemistry)
- Aerosols and health (e.g. disease transmission, drug delivery to the lungs)
- Aerosol technology (e.g. novel materials and particle synthesis using aerosols, combustion processes)
- Aerosol measurement techniques (e.g. optical techniques, novel measurement methods)
- Atmospheric and environmental aerosols (e.g. air quality, climate change)

What degree do I need to apply?

The breadth of aerosol science means we are looking for applicants from a broad range of backgrounds. You just should aspire to work in a multidisciplinary field and have an undergraduate background in any of the following areas: chemistry, physics, biological sciences, life and medical sciences, mathematics and computer science, chemical and mechanical engineering, pharmaceutical and environmental sciences.

Depending on the subject area, applicants must hold/achieve a minimum of an upper second-class MSci or BSc honours degree, or equivalent, in an area of physical science, engineering or biological science.

When will I know if my application is successful?

Following the recruitment and assessment day, we will write to you to let you know if we are recommending you for a studentship. There will then be an opportunity for you to meet and discuss specific PhD projects with supervisors. If you like the project and the supervisor considers you are a good fit for their project, you then formally apply to the home institution of the supervisor. We hope you will then receive a formal offer within a matter of a couple weeks.

The First Year of Your PhD

Where do I live in the first year?

All of the training in the first two teaching blocks (end of September to end of April) will be hosted at the CAS hub at the University of Bristol. During this time, we will be able to live in postgraduate accommodation at the University of Bristol paying only for the period you are in residence (not the full calendar year). After this (late April, early May), you will likely move to your home institution, finding accommodation for the rest of your PhD study.

What if my Thematic Broadening Research Sabbatical is not in my home institution or at University of Bristol?

In some instances, you may be undertaking a Thematic Broadening Sabbatical (TBS) during May-July of the first year at an institution that is not your home institution. In many instances, this may be in a neighbouring institution allowing you to commute (CAS will pay your travel costs). In some instances, you may be undertaking this short project in Bristol or Bath, in which case you can remain in the postgraduate accommodation. For a small number of projects, you may be undertaking your TBS in a third institution far removed from Bristol or your home institution (e.g. if your home institution is Manchester and your TBS is in Cambridge). In these instances, we will help you find short term accommodation near the institution hosting your TBS.

What training do I have in the first year?

Aerosol science is unlikely to be something you have any training in from your undergraduate study. You will bring your particular specialist knowledge (from your undergraduate degree) to your study and train in a multidisciplinary team, benefiting from the breadth of expertise across the team. You will receive training in aerosol fundamentals (1/3 of first year training), giving you all of the background you need for your PhD and to be an agile researcher in the future. You will also receive training in professionalism and translation (about 1/6, e.g. in responsible innovation, regulation and policy, public engagement) and research methods (about 1/6, e.g. advanced computational and data analysis tools for aerosols). The Research Broadening Sabbatical makes up the final component of the third year).

When do I start my PhD research?

The Research Broadening Sabbatical will represent the first steps in your PhD journey, giving you an opportunity to learn techniques and get some publishable results in an area of aerosol science complementing your main PhD project. After formally progressing to the PhD in about month 11 of your first year, you will be into your PhD project fully.

How many years am I funded for?

You will receive funding for 4 years at the level of the typical UKRI stipend. See indicative levels at: <https://www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training/>

Years 2 to 4 and the longer-term

What are the other benefits of doing a PhD with CAS?

You will continue to participate in the CAS network throughout your PhD. Throughout your PhD, you will have a weekly opportunity to listen to a webinar (a research seminar broadcast online) presented by leading researchers from around the world. You will also continue to work with your peers, supporting each other's progress through co-operative learning groups and contributing to a journal club. You will attend the annual CAS conference and two week long summer schools each year in specialist areas of aerosol science.

What mentoring will I receive?

You will receive mentoring from your PhD project supervisor, the academic co-supervisor who will host your Thematic Broadening Research Sabbatical, and an industrial partner, giving you a perspective on aerosol science outside academia. During Year 2 or 3, you will have the opportunity to go on placement to work with the industrial partner.

Will I get an opportunity to meet with industry and potential employers?

Yes! CAS is working with around 50 partners ranging from large multinational companies to small spin outs, and public sector bodies to national research labs. You will have an opportunity to meet these partners at CAS events and through your placement, and will hear about career opportunities and vacancies.

Will I be able to meet and network with researchers outside CAS?

Yes! You will participate in a broad range of activities organised by the Aerosol Society of the UK and Ireland each year, including their annual conference and focus meetings on specific topics. See:

<https://aerosol-soc.com/>

You will also have the opportunity to attend international conferences and training events.