

## Call for Studentship Proposals for Entry in September 2021

This is an open call, to all potential AgriFoRwArdS CDT supervisors, for Studentship Proposals that are defined in partnership with an industry partner. The projects are to be largely funded by EPSRC, together with financial contribution from an industry partner/s. The successful proposals will be advertised on the AgriFoRwArdS website, from October 2020 onwards, for students applying for September 2021 entry.

Primary Supervisors should complete the Project Proposal Form and return it to the AgriFoRwArdS Delivery Team for consideration by the Selection Panel.

**Deadline:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

**Link for Project Proposal Form:**

[Project Proposal Form](#)

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### Who can submit a proposal?

A PhD project can be proposed by members of academic staff authorised to supervise PhD students within the AgriFoRwArdS CDT at the Universities of Lincoln, Cambridge and East Anglia.

### On what topic?

AgriFoRwArdS addresses fundamental challenges in RAS technologies for both agriculture and food production. The project should be influenced by a real-world industry need and focus on one of the following RAS component technology areas, including but not limited to:

Mobile Autonomy

Manipulation and Soft Robotics

Sensing and Perception

Fleet Management

Human-Robot Collaboration

Further information on potential research areas can also be found in the §UK-RAS White Paper on the Future of Robotic Agriculture <sup>1</sup>

### Proposal Content

Proposals should demonstrate that the student will be engaged on a rewarding and relevant research project that will provide them with a first-class research experience.

- The proposal should have clearly articulated aims, objectives and focus.
- The research methodology should be appropriate and well defined
- The proposal should demonstrate scientific rigour in its approach

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ukras.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/UK\\_RAS\\_wp\\_Agri\\_web-res\\_single.pdf](https://www.ukras.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/UK_RAS_wp_Agri_web-res_single.pdf)

- The project should clearly enable the student to demonstrate a level of independence and originality, to test ideas and hypotheses, and to make a contribution to learning that would be potentially worthy of publication.
- The proposal should detail industrial participation, including agreed financial contributions.

### **Suitability & Feasibility**

The project should be well-suited to a PhD. It will have clear aims that provide opportunities for intellectual challenge whilst having a reasonable element of “security” in that due progress can be made within the time constraints, and by a student who may be undertaking research for the first time.

- The project is feasible within the given resource limitations (including financial constraints).
- The project is achievable within the given time frame.
- Risks to the completion of the project are identified, and robust contingency plans described that would allow the student to successfully conclude a programme of doctoral level research in the event of delays to, or failure of, the original work plan.

### **Industry Collaboration**

Projects with industry partner support already secured will be given priority. Industry Partners must be willing to commit to co-funding the studentship in advance. For further details on the required financial contribution, please discuss with the CDT Project Lead at the respective institution. Supervisors are actively encouraged to have engaged with an industry partner prior to submitting the project proposal. The AgriFoRwArdS Delivery Team will help facilitate communications between Supervisors and Industry. This is for two reasons:

- to control the amount of contact with our Industry Partners, to ensure that good relationships are maintained via a cohesive and joined up approach to Industry Partner communications; and,
- to prevent an internal race for securing industry support. The AgriFoRwArdS Delivery Team can facilitate conversations with the right person by providing supervisors with contact details and making the introduction.

New industry partners with relevant interests in agri-food are also very welcome to join the CDT.

**Before contact is made with industry**, please contact the AgriFoRwArdS Delivery Teams (contact details below) who will be able to provide you with the information, and support, detailed above.

Lincoln: Agriforwards.cdt@lincoln.ac.uk

Cambridge: Agriforwards-cdt@eng.cambs.ac.uk

UEA: Agriforwards.cdt@uea.ac.uk

### **How to apply**

By sending the [Project Proposal Form](#) electronically via the AgriFoRwArdS website.

## **Selection of projects**

The incorporation of a PhD project into the AgriFoRwArdS Programme involves two separate steps: 1) Selection of the PhD project, 2) Selection of the PhD student for the selected project.

### 1- Project selection

PhD projects should align with at least one of the above RAS component technology areas, and be based on a real-world challenge, as defined in liaison with an industry partner. Project selection is subject to evaluation by the CDT Executive Team and approval by the CDT Industrial Advisory Board. Selection criteria will include the fit to the CDT objectives, scientific quality (originality, significance and rigour of the proposed research), industry partnership, and track record of the supervisory team, with priority given to early career researchers where possible.

### 2 – Student Selection

Successful Studentship Proposals will be advertised on the AgriFoRwArdS website, from October 2020 onwards, for students applying for September 2021 entry. Applicants will apply online, for a specific studentship proposal, by completing an application form, and providing a CV and transcript.

All applications are anonymised prior to the shortlisting process. Shortlisting is the responsibility of the AgriFoRwArdS Project Lead at the relevant University.

Studentship Proposal Primary Supervisors will be invited to serve on the interview panel, together with other AgriFoRwArdS members as selected by the CDT Project Lead at the respective institution.