



# lapetus Diversifying Talent Scholarship Scheme 2025-2026

## Guidance for Prospective Students

11<sup>th</sup> November 2025 - V1

1. All applications are made via an online form. A Word template is provided so that applicants may edit their responses in advance. The assessment criteria used to evaluate applications are given in [Appendix 3](#) of this document and we strongly encourage applicants to use these criteria to structure their answers.  
**By the deadline of Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026 12 midday (UK time), applicants must have completed the following:**
  - a. Applicants must complete the online lapetus Diversifying Talent Scholarship Application Form. Once submitted, applicants will be given a Confirmation Reference Number.
  - b. Applicants must then submit a copy of their 2-page CV and their academic transcripts to [lapetus.applications@durham.ac.uk](mailto:lapetus.applications@durham.ac.uk), putting in the email Subject Line the Confirmation Reference Number and their Last Name in the format: [Confirmation Reference Number], [Applicant Last Name]. Applicants are advised not to include a photograph and write their CV without gender specific pronouns to avoid unconscious bias during the application process.
2. Once you have submitted your application, lapetus will automatically contact your referees on Monday 5th January to request a reference. Please ensure you have asked your referees in advance of submitting the application form and that they are available to respond to the request. The deadline for submitting references to lapetus is **Friday 16th January 2026 at 12 midday**. Full details of what referees need to provide will be sent directly to them from lapetus.
3. Complete applications will be circulated to the Scholarship Committee for scoring. A ranked list will determine shortlisting for interview.
4. Following the interview, supervisors from across the partnership will suggest possible project outlines in the chosen research area of the successful candidate, and the candidate will work with the supervisor of their choice to select or create a PhD project.

## Further Information

**Professor Philip Stephens - Lead DTP Director**

Email: [philip.stephens@durham.ac.uk](mailto:philip.stephens@durham.ac.uk)

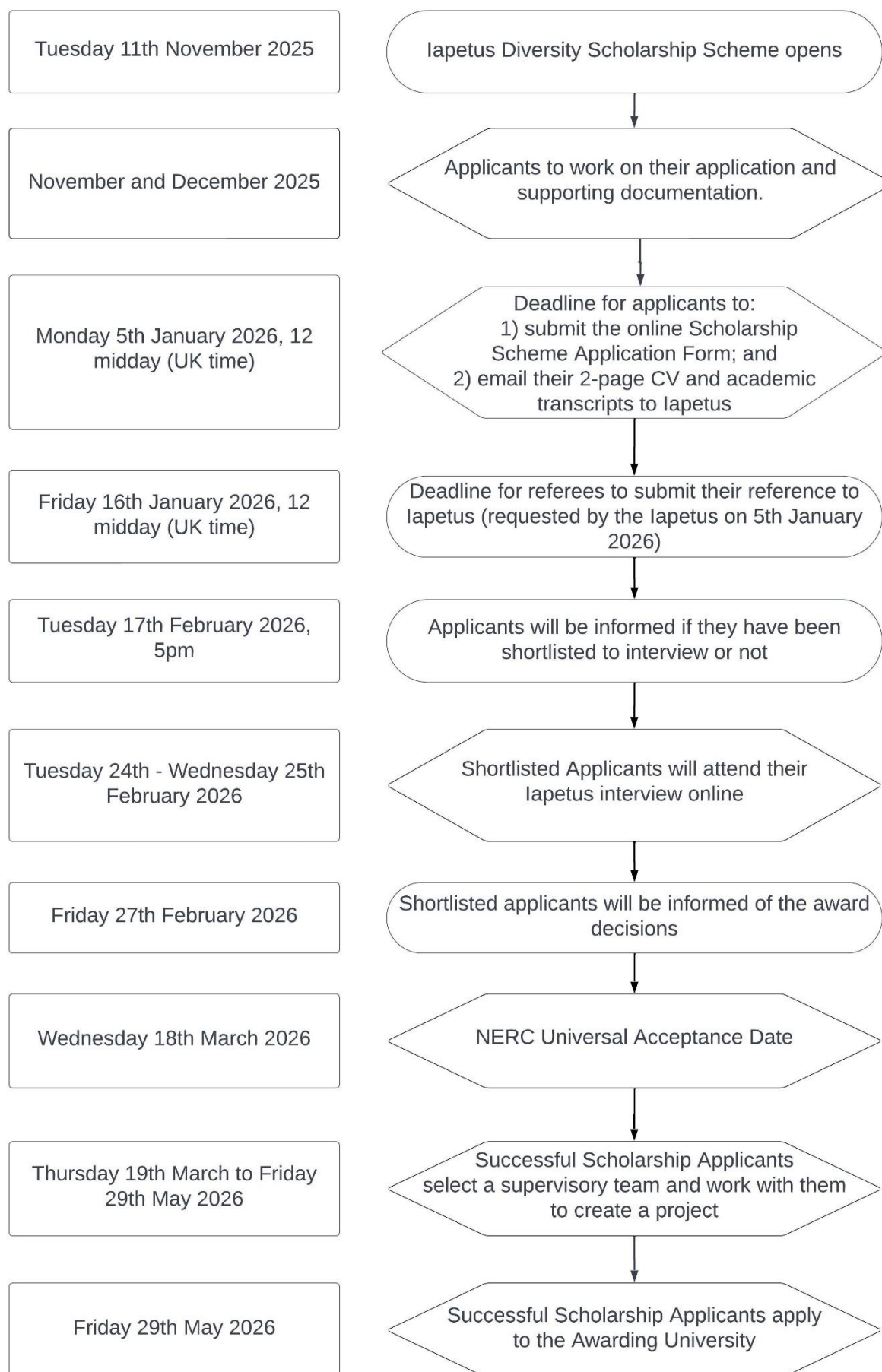
**Jennifer Gadouleau - DTP Manager**

Email: [lapetus.applications@durham.ac.uk](mailto:lapetus.applications@durham.ac.uk)

## Appendix 1 - Timeline

| Dates                                             | Activity / Milestone                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> November 2025            | lapetus Applications open                                                                                                                                    |
| Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2026, 12pm         | Deadline for applicants to apply for a scholarship:<br>a. Complete online Scholarship Scheme Application Form<br>b. Email 2-page CV and academic transcripts |
| Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2026, 12 midday   | Deadline for references to be submitted to lapetus.<br>lapetus will automatically contact your references on Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> January.                 |
| Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 5pm        | Applicants will be informed of whether they have been shortlisted for interview                                                                              |
| Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 5pm        | Invitation to Interviews sent out to candidates                                                                                                              |
| Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 9am-5pm    | Interviews of candidates                                                                                                                                     |
| Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 9am-12pm | Interviews of candidates                                                                                                                                     |
| Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 2pm-4pm  | lapetus Studentships and Scholarship Panel convenes                                                                                                          |
| Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> February 2026             | All candidates notified by lapetus of award decisions                                                                                                        |
| Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2026 12 noon     | Deadline for selected candidates to accept or decline their award offer. (NERC Universal Acceptance Date)                                                    |
| Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2026 onwards      | Candidates work with supervisors of their choice on selecting / creating a PhD project                                                                       |
| Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2026                  | Candidate has an agreed PhD project and supervisory team.<br>Candidate has submitted a PhD application to the awarding university.                           |

Full details of the scheme's process are shown in the flowchart below.



## Appendix 2 - Iapetus DTP Host Organizations

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

## Appendix 3 - Student Assessment Criteria

### Marking Scheme for selection of applicants for Iapetus interview based upon documents received including application form, CV, transcripts 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><b>I. Background</b></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 area, and in environmental science, more generally. Supporting information might come from section 3.1 of the application form, in relation to educational choices, section 3.2, in relation to any relevant work experience, or section 3.3 (especially questions 27, 29 and 30). Referees might also be expected to allude to the candidate's background and suitability for research in the environmental sciences.</p> <p>Evidence from sections 3.2 and 3.3 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 and 3.3 should be used, for example, for candidates seeking to embark on a research project after graduating some time ago.</p> | 10        |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>2. Fit to Research Area</b></p> <p>Candidates need to demonstrate how their skills, qualifications, experience and interests fit to, and support the general area in which they intend to conduct research. Section 3.3 provides a specific statement on this criterion (question 29). However, reviewers should be careful to assess contextual information and to balance past specific experience 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, and should be illustrated in section 3.3 and, potentially, in references.</p> <p>A strong application will clearly articulate the candidate's interests and experience relevant to the research area, 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 suitability. 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 3.3 and 4 of the nomination form may be useful in evaluating these aspects.</p> | 6 |
| <p><b>3. Future Potential</b></p> <p>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 for research based, for example, 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 (see, for example, section 3.3, question 27) 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, and a wish to pursue activities related to, this research area, in the future.</p> <p>A strong candidate will demonstrate that they are well equipped to deliver a research project and also able to engage in other related activities and initiatives that will not only support their individual research, but the wider lapetusS2 and/or disciplinary community.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2 |
| <p><b>4. Achievement in adversity</b></p> <p>Based on the candidate's CV, the narrative sections of the application form, and the references, this criterion provides an opportunity to recognise aspects of the candidate's academic performance, or acquisition of other skills, in spite of challenges faced.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 2 |

## Interviews and Overall Evaluation

Interviews of shortlisted candidates will be conducted in a single set of panels (see Appendix I) using a set of common questions about their application and PhD. Applicants are requested to ensure that they are available on 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 application.