

RESEARCH STUDENTSHIP

All studentships are highly competitive, and you should ensure (and demonstrate) that there is a good match between your own qualifications and interests and those being sought for the particular studentship.

Research School where studentship will be held	School of Life Sciences (Huxley)
Studentship reference	FNS_CSoftley_March25
Web link to any further information (e.g. Research Institute/School/Faculty)	Supervisor info: Charlie Softley - Keele University Funding charity: Alstrom Syndrome – Support & Information
Research topic or field - title	Alström Syndrome: Studying African clawed frogs and aquatic flatworms with a mutation modelling this ultra-rare condition
Research topic or field full description (or attached document).	<p>This PhD programme will train the student to work with model organisms and to understand ciliopathies, focussing on Alström Syndrome. This PhD study will be split into two aims to provide good development opportunities. We will use two model animals: the African clawed frog (<i>Xenopus laevis</i>), and aquatic flatworms (<i>Schmidtea mediterranea</i>). Alström Syndrome is caused by alterations in the Alms1 gene. Alms1 affects cilia throughout the body, leading to a wide range of symptoms. We will use CRISPR/Cas9 to mutate the frog alms1 gene, and RNAi to knock down the alms-like gene in the flatworms and study the effects.</p> <p>This PhD is supported by Alström Syndrome UK, a charity that supports patients and their families. This position will include outreach, explaining the science to these groups.</p>
Expected start date	September 2025
Mode of attendance	Full time, 3 years

Funding support available – Fees, stipend, duration	<p>Living costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self funded • home students can apply for government student loans <p>Tuition fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part funded • £2000 discount off the following fees each year for 3 years • Home tuition fees for three years, at £5,006pa in 2025/6, exact rate for 2026/7 and onwards subject to confirmation from UKRI. • International tuition fees for three years, at £16,040 in 2024/5 exact rates for 2025/6 and onwards subject to confirmation from UKRI. <p>Project fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully funded • £5000 per year for 3 years for consumables and research-related travel will be paid by Alstrom Syndrome UK, the charity that supports patients and families of the condition that will be researched.
Source of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-funded • School (£2000 fee discount) • Alstrom Syndrome UK funding (£5000 consumables and travel)
Eligibility criteria	Applicants must have or expect to have a degree in biology, pharmacology or another relevant field before they start
Terms and conditions of studentship	As per the University Code of Practice
Number of studentships available	1
Application details	Please go to http://www.keele.ac.uk/pgresearch/studentships/ and click on the "Apply online here" button in this studentship. Please quote X on your application.
Closing date for applications	28 th April 2025
Contact for further information and to whom applications will be sent	c.a.softley@keele.ac.uk

Candidate profile

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications, Experience and Skills	<p>An undergraduate degree in biology, pharmacology or other cognate discipline</p> <p>Familiarity with health and safety within the lab environment</p> <p>Experience of scientific and logical thinking</p> <p>Understanding of how ethical questions may guide experiments</p> <p>Familiarity with key formulae that may be used in a lab setting, eg making solutions</p>	<p>A postgraduate qualification in biology/pharmacology or other cognate discipline</p> <p>Knowledge of underlying physiology such as cilia, lung function and kidney function</p> <p>Familiarity with use of model organisms in a lab setting</p> <p>Personal licence for vertebrate use in the lab</p> <p>Familiarity with gene editing methods such as CRISPR/CAS9 and gene manipulations such as morpholinos and RNAi studies</p> <p>Experience of biophysical methods such as immunofluorescence, in situ hybridisation</p>
Attitude and Personality	<p>Effective communication (oral and written) skills, presentation and training skills</p> <p>Good interpersonal skills</p> <p>Ability to work independently and as part of a team on research programmes</p> <p>Ability to initiate, plan, organise, implement and deliver programmes of work</p> <p>Willingness to learn new skills</p>	<p>Willingness to travel occasionally for work eg to Portsmouth for frog work, or to conferences and events</p>

Keele University values diversity, and is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity. In support of these commitments, Keele University particularly welcomes applications from women and from individuals of black and ethnic minority backgrounds for this post. More information is available on these web pages:

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/equalitydiversity/>

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/athenaswan/> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/raceequalitycharter/disabilityconfident/>