

UNICAS FAQs

UNICAS

What is UNICAS?

UNICAS is an internal funding scheme promoting collaborative research and use of equipment and analytical expertise.

Who are on the UNICAS committee?

The committee is made up of representatives from technical, research, academic and support staff from all faculties.

How is UNICAS funded?

UNICAS is funded by the Research Board and jointly by the Faculties of Science, Engineering and Medicine. Funding has been secured for the next 2 years until 2019.

Can we see who has been funded previously?

Yes, please go to <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/fabs/rqs/equipment/unicas/unicas.aspx> and scroll to the bottom of the page.

How do we acknowledge UNICAS post-funding?

Please include the statement; "This research was supported by a University of Nottingham Interdisciplinary Centre for Analytical Science (UNICAS) award". We would also like you to keep us informed of any developments and outputs following the end of the funding. You can do this by emailing the UNICAS Project Manager.

Who do I get in touch with if I have any questions about the scheme?

Please get in touch with the UNICAS Project Manager Ginny Birney in the first instance. Ginny.birney@nottingham.ac.uk or 0115 951 5659.

Does UNICAS support any other activity?

Yes, UNICAS has supported a number of facility events such as the Raman Spectroscopy facility and the High Performance Computing facility. If you would like to promote your facility to the wider University, please get in touch with the UNICAS Project Manager.

The Sandpits

What is a UNICAS sandpit?

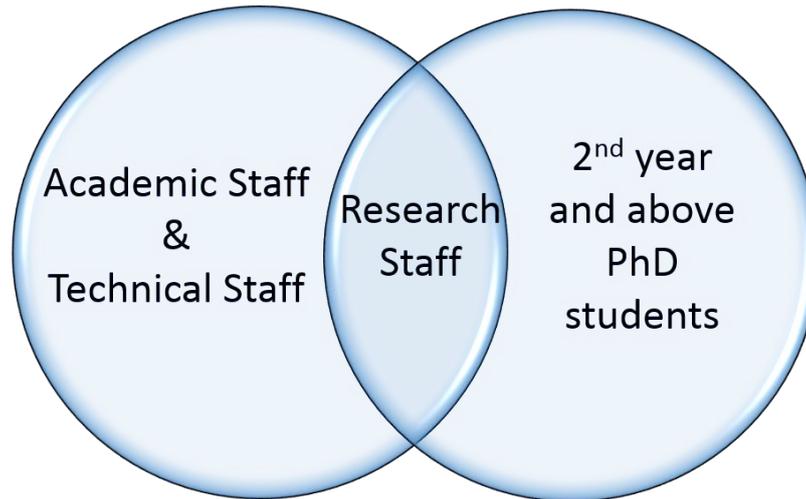
UNICAS sandpits are informal networking events, open to all academic, research and facilities staff and 2nd year + PhD students (there are two schemes more details on these are below). The sandpits begin with a networking lunch followed by informative presentations from GRT Theme Leads, central research support areas, the UNICAS Project Manager and 1-slide-in-1-minute presentations from all delegates.

*UNICAS Sandpits – Held on 3 Wednesday afternoons, in October, December and January, themed around the [Global Research Themes](#); Transformative Technologies, Health & Wellbeing and Sustainable Societies, open to **all** academic, research and technical staff from all faculties.*

UNICAS @ Graduate School Sandpits – Held on 2 Wednesday afternoons in November and January, open to all research staff (R&T 4A-R/4-R/5-R) and doctoral students (2nd year PhD or above). Please note: Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors and technical staff are not eligible to attend these sandpits).

UNICAS Sandpit (£15,000)

UNICAS @ Graduate School Sandpit (£5,000)



Research staff are eligible to attend both sandpit events.

How do I register for a sandpit?

Registrations for academic, research and technical staff are done through 'Eventbrite', a link to this will be displayed on the university web pages here:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/fabs/rqs/equipment/unicas/events.aspx>

Registrations for the UNICAS @ Graduate School sandpits are handled by the Graduate School and through Central Short Courses. A link to register will be displayed here:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/graduateschool/funding/current-students/interdisciplinary-funding.aspx>

I have registered but now unable to attend, can someone present in my place?

Unfortunately not, the format of the sandpit includes networking and requires all presenters to be there. If someone else from your group attends in your place, they will be able to apply and you may be able to be included on the application as a collaborator, you will not be able to lead an application.

Can I attend both UNICAS and UNICAS @ Graduate School sandpits?

If you are on a research only contract then yes you are eligible to attend both sandpits.

How do I get in touch with others who have attended a sandpit?

Your details will be kept on file and the details of all attendees will be emailed to you and shared on Workspace.

What should be included on my 1-slide-in-1-minute?

Your slide should be an introduction to you, your research and your expertise/offering or research gap/question.

Can I promote my facility/equipment at a sandpit?

Yes absolutely, you can do this through your one slide in one minute.

Are the sandpits themed?

Yes they have been themed in line with the Global Research Themes. This is open to change in the future if the committee decides to do so. The UNICAS @ Graduate School sandpits are not themed, we look to attract as many late stage doctoral students and researchers as possible and hold one sandpit on University Park (November) and one at Sutton Bonington (January).

Does it matter which sandpit I attend?

No. However, the UNICAS sandpits are GRT themed, so they may attract attendees from certain schools/research areas.

I have a research project in mind, can I still attend a sandpit and apply?

Yes, as long as you have not already been funded for the project.

Do I have to present 1-slide-in-1-minute?

Yes! Everyone has to stand up and present a slide.

Does everyone on the application need to have attended a sandpit?

No, only the PI needs to have attended, however we do hope to fund new projects where researchers have met at sandpits.

Do I need to be aligned to a Beacon in order to attend?

No. The sandpits are themed to give a focus to the sandpits however these are not designed to restrict attendance in any way. There are two types of sandpit UNICAS and UNICAS @ Graduate School. Attendees should ensure they are attending the correct type of sandpit for their job role/student status.

Finances

What can I spend the funding on?

*The funding can be used for consumables, travel & subsistence, facilities costs, conference attendance, and staff costs.**

**Please note that funds cannot be used to employ someone on a new contract to carry out work. All collaborators must be under contract at the University until 31st July in the year of funding.*

Can I use the funds to buy equipment?

The funds can be used to buy new items of equipment under the value of £10,000. Funds can also be used to buy parts or to upgrade current pieces of equipment. However, the purpose of the scheme is to make use of analytical equipment and expertise already present at the University and any purchases made must be justified as essential for the project and not possible to be obtained in other ways.

Can the UNICAS funds be used to pay for someone's time?

Yes, provided that person is currently employed by the University of Nottingham. When using any outside resource, the application needs to be clear about the reasons for this, proving that this work cannot be done by someone internally and not for the bulk of the project.

What happens after funding has finished?

All money should be spent by 31st July, the project can continue past this date however, no funding will be available at this point. You will be contacted by the UNICAS Project Manager for updates on outputs and will be asked to contribute to future sandpits by presenting a Case Study.

When will I get my project code?

Your project code will be sent to you by 1st April.

I have some questions about spending against my code, who do I get in touch with?

In the first instance you should contact your school/department finance contact. You can contact the UNICAS Project Manager also however, specific finance queries or transaction queries should be managed through your school.

Why is the funding period so short?

The funding ends in line with the University financial year.

When can I start spending?

You can start spending as soon as you receive your project code from the UNICAS Project Manager.

Can UNICAS funds be used to pay for summer interns?

No, anyone working on the project should be under contract by the University, funds cannot be used to pay PhD students/stipends. Temporary/casual contracts are possible however, thought needs to be put in to the setting up of this in time for the project starting as there are only 4 months to spend the money.

[Applying for funding](#)

Am I eligible to apply for UNICAS funding?

In order to apply for UNICAS funding you need to meet the following criteria:

- *You must have attended a sandpit (as PI on a project)**
- *You must be collaborating with someone from another school/research department discipline.*

**If you haven't attended a sandpit you can still be named on an application, however the PI for your project will need to have attended.*

I am in my thesis pending period, can I apply for funding?

Yes, provided you have written permission from your supervisor and will still be within your contract with the University by the end of the funding period (31st July). You will also need written permission from your school for any lab work that you intend to do to confirm you are covered by University insurance. This will all need to be evidenced at the time of your application.

My employment contract runs out before 31st July, can I apply?

No, if you are the primary applicant you will need to have a contract with the University in place past 31st July.

Are there word limits on the application form?

Yes, please see the application form for guidance on word limit and font size.

How are the applications scored?

The applications are scored by the committee individually (by at least 4 different members). There are 5 assessment criteria which are weighted. Each area is scored and the cumulative scores are used to create a ranking overall. The committee meet to discuss any borderline cases and the decision is made at a special committee meeting.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	
Scoring criteria	Weighting
Scientific excellence & Originality	30/100
Effective collaboration	25/100
Novel use of research equipment	20/100
Value for money	15/100
External funding & Impact	10/100

Can I see an example of a successful application?

No, we don't provide anonymised applications. Guidance on what to cover is in the application form and discussed during the sandpits.

What are the UNICAS committee looking for?

Novel, interesting projects which use internal equipment or analytical expertise and evidence of collaboration outside of your current School or Research Group.

What is the likelihood that my application will be successful?

We are receiving more applications each year, however the success rate to date has been ~1 in 7 applications are funded.

I didn't attend a sandpit but my Col did, can I still apply as a PI?

No, in order to be a PI on a project you need to have attended a sandpit.

Can I get feedback on my unsuccessful application?

Yes, each of the committee members marking your application are asked to provide specific feedback and this (where provided) will be forwarded on to you. We will also send you your ranking and scores on an anonymised spreadsheet.

Can I make more than one application?

Yes, however, if you are applying with the same application to both schemes this will be noted by the committee and is not always viewed positively! You can apply more than once with a different project idea and different collaborators.

Can I re-apply to the scheme next year?

Yes, in fact many applicants have been successful the second time of applying after using their feedback to improve their case.

Where can I find the UNICAS application form?

This will be sent to you via email following the sandpit. You can also access it [here](#) on Workspace.

Projects and Collaboration

Who can I collaborate with?

UNICAS is an internally focussed scheme, promoting the use of University facilities and analytical expertise. You should find a collaborator from a different school or research group, internal to the University as a priority, and at least the first two named researchers on an application should be internal. UNICAS will allow external collaborators as long as it can be proven that this service or expertise cannot be sourced internally. It should be clear that all named investigators are contributing to the project.

Can there be joint PIs on my project?

No, UNICAS encourages researchers to make a decision on the project lead as would be the case on any applications to most external funding bodies.

What are the project timeframes?

Projects need to be ready to start on 1st April of each year. Funding for the projects will be available to spend between 1st April and 31st July. After 31st July projects can continue however, funds will no longer be available to spend against the project code.

Can I collaborate with someone external to the University?

Only if you can prove that the service offered/needed by your project cannot be provided by someone internally. There would also need to be at least one other University collaborator, from a different discipline (School/Research Group) working on the project with you.

Can my project continue after 31st July?

Yes, although there will no longer be funds available to you.

What are the expectations following funding?

We expect you to spend the money and on time! We will also be in touch to see what you have been doing after the funding as finished, probably at 6 month intervals. It would be very much appreciated if you could let the UNICAS Project Manager have any publication, presentation, and funding updates.

Can I collaborate with someone from the same Faculty (Engineering has no schools)?

Yes but the collaboration must be between different Schools or Research Groups (Engineering). For instance, applications between the Schools of Biosciences and Pharmacy (both in the Faculty of Science), or the Research Group BECT and Human Factors (both in the Faculty of Engineering) or School of Chemistry and Research Group BECT would all be accepted. If you are unsure and it can be demonstrated on your application that you do not currently work together or your disciplines are suitably different, this will be assessed by the UNICAS Project Manager if necessary with discussion with your Faculty.

My research doesn't involve the use of equipment, can I still apply?

Yes, UNICAS supports analytical science, so as long as your project uses analytical expertise this is fine. If you're not sure, please get in touch with the UNICAS Project Manager.