WHAT IS ACCE?

ACCE (Adapting to the Challenges of a Changing Environment) is a doctoral training partnership (DTP) between the Universities of Sheffield, Liverpool, and York, the Natural History Museum (NHM) and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH). The partnership, which is led by the University of Liverpool, brings together partners from the research, education, policy and industrial sectors to complement the disciplinary components of ACCE. It is the only Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) funded DTP with an explicit emphasis on the whole-organism aspects of environmental research. ACCE will recruit five PhD cohorts (~100 students) over five years (2019-2023) and thereby form a multi-disciplinary research training community. Members of this community receive advanced training in the most important research skills in environmental science, in addition to complimentary training in professional and transferable skills essential in today's public and private sector workplaces.

ACCE includes a strong element of cross-institutional co-supervision of students and whole cohort training events designed to reduce institutional boundaries and ensure students experience world-class training that will enable them to become leaders of the next generation of environmental scientists. ACCE focusses on four key areas of future science innovation: securing ecosystems services and environmental resources, predicting and mitigating impacts of climate change, understanding the dynamic of biodiversity, and investigating the mechanisms of evolutionary change.

WHAT ACCE CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR

ACCE can provide financial support for students undertaking placement opportunities with a range of (non-academic) public research organisations, NGOs, small-medium enterprises and other private organisations, charities, trusts, local councils etc. or other parties, for up to three months.

Placements may support a range of activities, including, but not limited to:

❖ Seeding new relationships with partners that might then progress into longer term engagement;
❖ Improving the student's understanding of how research is used in society and hence help them to design better research;
❖ Embedding the culture of Knowledge Exchange with external partners, students and supervisors.

The ACCE placement scheme is open to ACCE DTP PhD students from the University of Sheffield, University of Liverpool, University of York, Natural History Museum and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

The key to a successful work placement is the identification and planning of an opportunity that provides mutual benefits and positive outcomes for both the student and employer.

Many of the most effective placements are based upon project work which the employer is actively seeking to have carried out – work experience has the greatest payoff when both the employer and the student are meeting tangible objectives and needs; the student also needs to be able to reflect on what they have learned during their time with you.

IDEAS FOR PLACEMENTS

The placement should be a well-justified enhancement to the PhD training. It should provide relevant training on subject-specific or generic transferable skills identified in their training need analysis or the UK Researcher development framework (https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related/researcher-development-framework-rdf-vitae.pdf/view).

At the same time, ACCE wishes to incentivise genuine engagement with non-academic end users of research with this scheme. Placements are intended to help students understand how their research and professional skills can be used in a broad but relevant context.

Placements should ideally be discrete projects and they must be well planned and managed. They should provide experience at a level appropriate for a postgraduate student.

Examples of different types of placements include:

- ❖ Conducting surveys, analysing data and producing reports
- ❖ Investigating efficiency and cost-saving activity
- ❖ Managing, delivering a particular service for a period of time
- ❖ Joining specific teams to assist in the delivery of their activities and projects.

Non-research roles such as:

- ❖ Teaching – in schools, using the Researchers in Residence scheme, or through other mechanisms;
- ❖ Policy – developing policy or working in a related setting, such as a government department, local authority, non-departmental public body, professional association, charity, research funder or medical organisation;
- ❖ Media – a wide variety of roles are possible here that help students understand the wider societal context of their research. Such placements could include working in science communication roles or other roles in a press office, science publishing company, zoo, museum or botanic garden etc.

ACCE students may approach you through one of two routes:

- ❖ by approaching you directly to negotiate a placement project opportunity;
- ❖ by responding to an advertisement placed on your behalf.

In either case, you may wish to hold a formal interview for the role or discuss a potential project proposal for placement in person with the student, or a more informal conversation, to decide whether the placement will be mutually beneficial for you and the student.

When you have decided whether you would like to proceed with the placement and provide the opportunity to the student, they will formally apply for financial support via the **ACCE placement application form**.

The ACCE placement application form, as well as a **project proposal**, is submitted to the ACCE DTP team, and all applications are considered by the ACCE Management Board. Support includes payment of stipend (at UKRI standard rate) for the duration of the placement, travel and accommodation costs as well as limited occasional expenses.

Placement support is awarded on a competitive basis, and the ACCE Management Board will evaluate applications based on criteria reflecting the benefit/impact, added value to the student's programme of study, and value for money.

We will require the placement provider to confirm that they wish to host this student during their placement and, if placement support is granted, they will:

- ❖ Provide the necessary resources to complete the placement and relevant training: computer/workstation, desk, appropriate personal protective equipment (where necessary); other equipment etc.;
- ❖ Take due care for the health and safety of the student and will ensure that the work the intern will undertake has been risk-assessed and that reasonably practicable control measures are in place;
- ❖ Make the necessary arrangements in their organisation to accommodate the placement;
- ❖ Cover any additional costs regarding the work the student will undertake to complete the tasks described in the placement proposal;
- ❖ Enter into a placement agreement with the research organisation to formalise expectations on both sides;
- ❖ Provide the student with an induction to the organization and the role the student will be carrying out.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY THE PLACEMENT PROVIDER

We will ask you to complete the following

❖ A **tripartite agreement** between the student, you as placement provider and the University hosting the PhD student, describing the rights and responsibilities of the parties;
❖ An **Employer Health and Safety form**;
❖ Host feedback report at the end of the placement.

Copies of these documents, signed by all parties, will be held centrally at the University of Liverpool.

WHAT TO AGREE WITH ACCE STUDENTS BEFORE THEY START

It will be helpful for both you and your student, if you are clear about how the placement will be managed.

Therefore, we recommend that you agree the following:

❖ The purpose of the project/role and how it sits with the aims of the organisation;
❖ The deliverables for the role and how they should be produced (for example, a set of marketing materials, regular contributions to a blog, a written report etc.);
❖ A brief description of the work or the project – description of the placement, main duties, work plan, including milestones - outlining what the individual will be working on, what colleagues they will encounter and their specialities, what the work environment will be, and identifying the responsible line manager;
❖ The key objective for the placement – if a desired outcome or set of results is spelt out, the work experience benefits from the clarity that this generates. It can also provide an important frame of reference for the work-based learning which the student will be acquiring through the placement;
❖ A list of resources/reading that will help them to prepare;
❖ The student's aspirations for the project, in terms of skills development, career exploration and professional networking;
❖ The hours and days they will work with you.

ACCE students come from an enormous range of backgrounds – they are mostly UK or EU students with limited or no work experience. Every organisation has its own workplace culture, and it would be helpful if you could explain this to your student to help them settle in as quickly as possible. This is particularly important as the placement is relatively short.

Please remember too, that your student will be fitting this placement around their studies and other commitments.

REPORTING

By the end of their placement, students will be required to provide a detailed **placement report** about the project and achievements during the placement within one month of completing the placement.

You, as the placement provider, will be asked to complete a **host feedback report** following the placement.

WORKPLACE CULTURE CHECKLIST

To ensure that your ACCE student understands the workings of your organisation, we recommend that you outline your expectations relating to the following:

☐	Normal working hours
☐	Dress code
☐	Coffee/lunch arrangements
☐	Drug/alcohol policy
☐	Working from home policy
☐	How to raise concerns
☐	Level of formality
☐	Internet usage policy
☐	Mobile phone usage policy
☐	Social activities

When your ACCE student starts on their first day, we strongly recommend that you provide an induction - you may wish to include any of the following (if the student is working on-site):

☐	Who will be line managing the project and to whom should the ACCE intern raise any queries
☐	How progress will be communicated - e.g. formal weekly meetings, or more informal chats over coffee
☐	Desk space
☐	Procedures for out of hours or lone working
☐	Emergency procedures
☐	Introduction to other team members
☐	How to use/log into IT systems
☐	Dealing with difficult customer/client situations
☐	Location of bathrooms
☐	Storage of personal items (coats, bags, valuables)
☐	Site layout including any restricted areas
☐	Arrangements for sick leave and holiday leave
☐	Information about other sites
☐	Transport/parking/bicycle storage
☐	Policies around absenteeism and lateness
☐	Security, keys and swipe cards
☐	General administration procedures
☐	Stationery and supplies

COVID-19 DISRUPTION

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted much work and has led to some ACCE students completing placements remotely and restricting travel to field sites. As the situation is ongoing, placement providers should be able to offer the opportunity to complete placements remotely where possible, as well as ensuring placements can be flexible to accommodate changes to work patterns where required. Providers should adhere to all Covid-19 health and safety guidance.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please treat your ACCE student the same way as you would any other staff member, and raise any concerns relating to absenteeism, lateness or performance with them directly. If the issue is not resolved, please alert the ACCE DTP team.

If you have any questions or concerns about the scheme, please don't hesitate to contact the ACCE DTP team (tel: 0151 795 1227; email: acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk or acce.dtp@sheffield.ac.uk).