



## **Adapting to the Challenges of a Changing Environment (ACCE) DTP2**

### **Supervisor Information Sheet 2022/23**

#### Overview

The ACCE DTP2 programme is the current iteration of the NERC-funded ACCE DTP, led by the University of Liverpool (DTP2, 2019-2023; the previous iteration, 2014-2018, was led by the University of Sheffield). Partners for DTP2 are the University of Sheffield, University of York, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) and the Natural History Museum, London (NHM).

All ACCE studentships must fit within the broad remit of focusing on living component (biology) of the environment.

#### Funding details

The consortium has funding for a notional number of studentships per year (14 full time equivalents – FTEs - in 2022/23; which usually means we can fund a total of 22-24 studentships when combined with funding from the Universities and other partners). The allocation of studentships the DTP will receive is confirmed on an annual basis. NERC funding is flexible in that it allows a varied number of studentships, as long as the minimum number of notional students is supported. Students are often 50:50 (NERC and University) match funded. Other funding models are possible (e.g. involving CASE or other collaborative partners), although fully-funded students should be at least 50% NERC funded to be counted as a NERC student.

Students are normally funded for 3.5 years, with a hard deadline of 4 years, by which time all full-time students have to submit their thesis. NERC expects that projects will be designed to be achievable within the funded period.

#### Project proposals and recruitment of students

Studentship proposals are requested by September each year for the following year's cohort (i.e. September 2022 for the 2023/24 intake). A sift of all proposals is carried out following the submission deadline, to ensure proposals fit to the ACCE remit, and to manage numbers up to an agreed limit for advertising. Only one project proposal can be made per lead supervisor per year. In addition, a supervisor can only be lead supervisor on three non-CASE or co-funded PhD projects within the 5 years of ACCE2 (2019 – 2023 recruitment rounds). Please note that local institutional rules may supplement these criteria to allow institutions to enhance the diversity of ACCE supervisors where necessary.

Details of the project proposal call and sift criteria are available on the [ACCE website](#).

Supervisors can nominate one or two candidates (may vary between institutions) for shortlisting to go forward to interview, which take place in February each year. Criteria for the shortlisting process have changed slightly for 2023/24 entry as part of our continued mission to reduce barriers for underrepresented groups in recruitment. We will be assessing students on a broader range of excellence criteria to reflect the reality that excellence and dedication can come in many forms. One particular development has been the requirement for all applicants to use a structured pro-forma for their personal statements instead of an open-ended cover letter; the template for this pro-forma is available on the [ACCE website](#). The final selection of

candidates to interview will then be decided from those nominated. All sift, shortlisting, and interview criteria will be made available at each stage of the process.

The offer letter process is handled locally by each institute/school, or partner institution.

## Stipend, fees and Research Training Support Grant

Student stipends are paid at the UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Stipend rate. For 2022/23 this is £17,668 (see <https://www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training/>). The UKRI Indicative Fee Level for 2022/23 is £4,596.

**Research Training Support Grant (RTSG).** The RTSG for students is set at £11,000 per student for the lifetime of the PhD. Please note that £2,800 of this amount is top-sliced and retained by the DTP to fund cohort training activities, therefore the overall amount available for student expenditure is **£8,200**.

The supervisor will be the signee for all purchases for their student, and should ensure NERC funds are spent according to the funder requirements (more details on allowable RTSG expenditure are available in the student handbook at the [ACCE website](#)). If studentships are co-funded by their own department or another organisation (such as CASE studentships), it is possible that there are different constraints on how the co-funding is spent. Note that, over the course of the PhD, at least half of the student's funding (for a full award) should come from NERC (see above) – so be careful not to spend more funds from the co-funder than from NERC. Please also note that, while the supervisor is the signatory on the grant, these funds can only be used for work relating to that PhD studentship, and the student should be informed of all expenditure.

The ACCE DTP Finance and Research Co-ordinator can assist with any queries ([acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk)).

## COVID19

There is still an element of uncertainty with the Covid-19 pandemic, although at the moment students are not necessarily facing lab or facilities disruption. As things stand, we do not expect additional money to be made available from UKRI or Universities to fund future costed extensions to PhD studentships; any additional funding awarded as part of the “phase 3” extension funding will need to be found from within our existing ACCE funds. We therefore ask supervisors and students to seek to include potential mitigation strategies into the planning and design of their projects. As ever, please maintain communication with the ACCE Management Board, if you see any problems with a student or their project.

## Training Needs

Each student needs to complete a **Training Needs Analysis** (TNA, sometimes called **Development Needs Analysis**) with their supervisor, at least once per year and revisited as necessary. This will normally be part of the student's standard progression processes at the host institution, but it is the supervisor's responsibility to make sure it happens. It is also important that the student is aware that the TNA/DNA has taken place, as NERC will ask students about this, so supervisors should emphasise to their students that this has occurred.

## Placements, research lab visits and extensions

ACCE provides opportunities for students to undertake research placements, research lab visits (RLVs) to broaden their experiences during their studentships, or to apply for extensions for health or other reasons

should they be needed. Please familiarise yourself with these by reading the [student handbook on the ACCE website](#). The DTP team or Institutional Lead at the relevant institution will be able to advise further (see contacts below).

## Cohort activities and peer-to-peer support

Supervisors should ensure each student has a **lab buddy** at a partner institution. This can be a student of a co-supervisor at another university. Buddying should be initiated at the Annual Meeting or at another time within the first months of the studentship, and buddy names should be forwarded to the DTP Manager (see contact details below). The DTP Manager can help find suitable potential buddies if needed.

Primary supervisors are expected to attend at least one day of the **ACCE Annual Conference**, held in **October/November** each year. You will be able to claim for travel expenses for this event from your student's RTSG funds.

Your student must attend the compulsory ACCE cohort training events, which mostly take place during their first year. **Dates are given on the [ACCE website](#)** and we'd appreciate your help in ensuring your student does not schedule anything that clashes with them. If it's unavoidable that essential field or experimental work clashes with a course at the first opportunity, the student must book on to the course in a subsequent year.

## Collaboration with non-academic partners

ACCE encourages supervisors to deepen engagement with non-academic partners, including promoting partnerships working to develop PhDs and CASE PhD projects. For more information about these, see the [Partnerships pages](#) on the ACCE website.

For **CASE studentships**, make sure you are aware of the CASE partner's financial responsibilities, and the requirements for the student to spend time with the partner. You should sign a collaboration agreement with your partner, administered by the legal team at your institution. More details are available in the student handbook, and at the NERC UKRI website: <https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/available/postgrad/focused/industrial-case/>.

We also enable some external organisations to become **co-funded partners**, whereby they contribute substantially (33-50%) towards the cost of a studentship, in return for guaranteeing that studentship to them and an academic co-supervisor. If you have connections with an organisation that might be interested in such an arrangement, please contact the ACCE DTP team.

## Student support

ACCE signposts to various support across the partner Universities, and the [ACCE health and wellbeing](#) webpages are updated with relevant information for all students. Specifically, [disability support allowance \(DSA\)](#) is available for UKRI-funded DTP students; details are available on the ACCE website, in the [student handbook](#) and on the [UKRI website](#).

## Reporting to NERC

You may be asked by the ACCE DTP team to provide information for reporting to NERC (normally information is requested to be sent to the ACCE DTP team). NERC have specific guidance and deadlines for information

they require. The DTP team will keep you informed about upcoming deadlines and requests for information, and will be able to help out with any queries. We ask that requests for information are dealt with in a timely manner.

One key information request that needs to be completed by the end of October each year is the submission of student details to Je-S for each student starting that year. Forms are distributed to all supervisors during September and should be returned to the DTP team by the stated deadline (normally in mid-October). The DTP director reviews all submission details before they are uploaded to Je-S.

## Key contacts

### DTP director

Professor Andy Fenton – [a.fenton@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:a.fenton@liverpool.ac.uk)

### Institutional leads

University of Liverpool: Dr Stephen Cornell – [scornell@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:scornell@liverpool.ac.uk)

University of Sheffield: Dr Karl Evans – [karl.evans@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:karl.evans@sheffield.ac.uk)

University of York: Professor Lisa Emberson – [l.emberson@york.ac.uk](mailto:l.emberson@york.ac.uk)

Natural History Museum: Dr Helen Robertson – [helen.robertson@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:helen.robertson@nhm.ac.uk)

CEH: Dr Sarah Burthe – [sburthe@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:sburthe@ceh.ac.uk)

### DTP administration team

Carolyn O’Leary, ACCE DTP Manager

Emma Robertson, ACCE DTP Deputy Manager

John Donnelly, Finance and Research Co-ordinator

To contact the DTP team, email: [acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk) or call 0151 795 1227

## Useful links

ACCE DTP website – [www.accedtp.ac.uk](http://www.accedtp.ac.uk)

Twitter account - @ACCE\_DTP

NERC website - <https://nerc.ukri.org/>

NERC DTPs information - <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/developing-people-and-skills/nerc/nerc-studentships/responsive-training/nerc-doctoral-training-partnerships-dtp/doctoral-training-partnerships-2/>

UKRI Terms and Conditions - <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/your-responsibilities-if-you-get-funding/meeting-ukri-terms-and-conditions-for-funding/>