



ACCE DTP APPLICATION PROCESS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Project selection

Can I make multiple applications?

You are allowed to apply for as many projects as are suitable to your interests. These applications are put forward to the supervisors of the projects, and they will choose the candidate they wish to put forward to ACCE for interview. ***You will only be able to be put forward to ACCE for one project.*** If you are selected by a supervisor for more than one project you will then need to choose which you would like to move forward with and inform all supervisors that you would/would not like to be put forward by them.

Roughly how many projects are funded, out of all of the projects advertised?

ACCE funds approximately 20-22 studentships per year.

Eligibility and funding

Do I need a 2.1 degree?

Candidates should have a degree in a relevant field to their chosen project. The ACCE DTP Universities (Liverpool, Sheffield and York) generally require the equivalent of a minimum 2:1 in their first degree, but exceptions can be made where applicants can demonstrate excellence in alternative ways. At ACCE we recognise that there are many ways to show excellence (including, but not restricted to, performance in masters courses, internships or employment). We are happy to consider applications from candidates with lower than a 2:1 award where excellence can be demonstrated in other ways - this would be considered on a case by case basis.

Who is eligible for home student fee rates?

UKRI have a comprehensive document outlining eligibility - please see Annex B of the [UKRI Training Grant Guidance](#). Please note that according to UKRI rules, the DTP may recruit up to 30% of the total cohort, as international students.

For information on home fees status please see individual institution guidance

[The University of Sheffield](#)

[University of York](#)

[University of Liverpool](#)



**Natural
Environment
Research Council**

I am an international student. Will it be possible to get international student fees funded?

ACCE covers the fees for all students at the UK fees rate. There may be additional support for a limited number of international students who are successful in their applications to ACCE.

This may cover all fees required for the PhD programme; these bursaries may be awarded on a competitive basis. We currently cannot guarantee that this will happen, or how many studentships will be supported. These decisions are being made at the institution level and so far are both undecided and out of our hands!

However, international/home status is not taken into consideration when considering applications and your funding status will not affect you in the application process.

I have been out of academia for several years, will this affect me?

You will not be judged for having been out of academia, whether it is for work, caring duties, illness or anything else. Like everyone else you will need a degree - however there is no time limit on when you were awarded it. We fully appreciate that experiences outside of academia can be a rich source of key skills that you would need for a PhD so be sure to think carefully about skills this experience has given you and make sure you tell us about this.

It is likely that the supervisor or interview panel might want to know what drew you back to academia, so use this time to show how passionate you are about research.

I'm not currently at a university so I don't have access to the library or resources - how can I stay up to date with the literature?

The easiest thing to do is to speak with the potential supervisor for the project you are interested in and ask them to send you the key literature for background on the project. If there is a specific paper you want to read and it is not freely available on the internet you can either ask them to download it, or you can always ask the authors. It's very flattering!

What are my chances of getting a PhD if I have only done a BSc?

In ACCE you will not be penalised for not having a masters qualification. However, ACCE PhDs are highly competitive and the majority of successful applicants have a masters qualification. This is because of the experience a masters degree provides rather than the certificate. However experience can equally come from many other sources, such as work, both academic and non academic.



Natural
Environment
Research Council

Making an application

How do the references work? Do I submit them or just contact details?

Please submit contact details for your referees only. A standard email will then be sent from the relevant institution, requesting the reference prior to applicant selection/interview. It is beneficial to forewarn the referees to expect the request so they can get it in on time!

What referees should I choose?

You will require two referees, one of which must be an academic reference (applications cannot be processed without one). This could be an undergraduate or masters project/dissertation supervisor or personal tutor, but could also be a module director/organizer, or someone you have worked for in an academic context from your University. If you are unable to find a person to provide an academic reference (e.g. if you completed your degree some time ago) you can ask your old department to provide a statement confirming your attendance and performance based on your records.

If you are applying for a position with your current (or past) supervisors it is not advisable to use them as a referee. Supervisors are also competing for funding, so there is a conflict of interest. If in doubt your chosen supervisor can provide guidance on the most suitable referee to include.

Do I need to provide written material as part of my application, and what do I provide?

Our institutional application portals are general, meaning that the same portal is used for all postgraduate applications to that institution. Some of our institutions do ask for a piece of written work, however this is not required for ACCE and will not be used to assess your application. If you would like to include an example (hey, if you have something to show off, feel free to show off!!) this could be a dissertation or project report, a paper or manuscript in preparation, a blog post/news article.

How long should my CV be?

Remember that the selection panels will see many applications. When assessing your CV/application, it's best to imagine a tired reader. The best CVs put the key information right in front of the reader without them having to hunt. Cut out all unnecessary words (e.g. use lists or bullet points rather than sentences) and exclude anything you don't feel is directly relevant. A regular CV should be approximately 1-2 pages depending on how much experience you have (if you have loads then do include it).



Natural
Environment
Research Council

How should I use the proforma? Should I just answer questions or use them to write an essay?

You can do either. Simply answering the questions will in no way adversely affect your chances. Like the CV, we will be assessing many applications so conciseness is helpful.

One of the attributes you look for in an applicant is creativity, could you give examples of this?

Creativity is critical in science and we use it in many ways - when designing experiments, troubleshooting problems or communicating science to others. In the guided personal statement we ask for applicants to demonstrate their creativity in question 4 by explaining how they would improve on previous work - either their own or that of others - to show us that they can think beyond the description provided to them.

You may also wish to include aspects of your creativity outside science - many scientists are also artists and musicians - or where you have led creative projects, e.g. outreach events, when you discuss your skills or on your CV as appropriate.

What should I use as an example for question 4? Should it be relevant to the project?

In question 4 we are purely looking to see your level of knowledge and enthusiasm so there is no requirement for it to be related to your project. However, it is also going to show us what kind of science you find interesting so being *broadly* relevant to the subject is advisable. The exception to this would be if you are discussing a project you worked on which happens to be in a different field.

What should I include for question 5 (Is there anything else you would like to tell us that can help to frame your application)? Is it a problem if I don't have anything to put down?

Question 5 is there to give us any information that could help us better understand each application. We included this particularly for applicants who have experienced structural or personal barriers in their education or work that may have limited their ability to show us their full potential.

There is no requirement to add anything here. Many ACCE applicants will not need to or may not wish to. Please only use it if you feel it would be beneficial to you.

Applicant selection

Is it more important to have the interest/motivation/desire to study the specific programme, or outstanding experience and academic achievements?

It's impossible to quantify these things, every student and scientist has a different set of strengths and weaknesses. That said, a passion for the project is an essential part of being a



successful PhD student and would be considered a basic requirement for any supervisor selecting their student. Do remember however that there is some (but not endless) flexibility in what you actually do within the PhD project, particularly in the latter years when you become an expert in that area.

How much does interview performance count vs your application?

Both interviews and applications are important. Interviews are a way of getting to know the candidate better and exploring their responses in a bit more detail. However, while you will be judged on your responses you will not be judged (consciously) on your performance. The interview panel fully understands that many applicants are nervous and some people are more affected by nerves than others. It is always advisable to practice for an interview and prepare yourself by reading up on the broader background of the project.

PhD life

Can I do a PhD part time?

Yes, all PhDs are available as part time or full time, with part time being a minimum of 50% of full time equivalent. Please discuss potential part time arrangements with the primary supervisor, ideally before applying to the programme.

Is flexible working supported?

This will be dependent on the project supervisor. ACCE funding does not dictate any work schedule but requires that any deviation from standard working patterns be agreed with your supervisor. It would be sensible to discuss this with them before you apply. The vast majority of supervisors will fully support a student's requirements but the project may have specific requirements e.g. where lab work or field work is necessary to complete the project.

Can I take a job while doing a PhD?

ACCE PhDs are funded by NERC so we are covered by their guidance. They encourage students to take on teaching or demonstration work, where this is compatible with their training and provided this is approved by their supervisors. Other paid work would require the consent of the supervisor and should not delay or interfere with your research training. If you want to get a sense of a supervisor's attitude without explicitly asking about this you can ask them about the work patterns and its flexibility.