



Natural
Environment
Research Council

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

Supervisor Information Sheet 2024/25

Overview

The ACCE DTP2 programme is the current iteration (2019-2024 entry) of the NERC-funded ACCE DTP, led by the University of Liverpool, alongside the University of Sheffield, University of York, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UK 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 2024/25 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. 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, and ACCE, expects that projects are designed to be achievable within the funded period, and it should normally be the case that students submit their thesis at the end of the 3.5 year funded period. The additional time (up to 4 years) should not routinely be considered as an unfunded write up period.**

2024/25 is the final year of recruitment to the current ACCE DTP; ACCE have submitted an application to NERC for new funding for a Doctoral Landscape Award (DLA) in 2024; a decision is due to be made by NERC during Autumn 2024. **if funded** this will be called the ACCE+ DLA, with its first cohort starting in October 2025.

Project proposals and recruitment of students

Studentship proposals are requested by September each year for the following year's cohort (i.e. September 2024 for the 2025/26 intake – please see the note above regarding ACCE's application for a DLA award). 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 ACCE+ DLA. Please note that local institutional rules may supplement these criteria to allow institutions to enhance the diversity of ACCE supervisors where necessary.

Please note that ACCE+ has not yet received a confirmation of new DLA funding, so while the first project call has taken place, we cannot guarantee that any projects submitted in the call will progress to being advertised as an ACCE+ project. As the recruitment process is changing for ACCE+ DLA, more details of this process will be circulated to supervisors in due course.

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

ACCE commitment to EDI

ACCE DTP is committed to recruiting extraordinary future scientists regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith or religious belief, pregnancy or maternity, parental or caring responsibilities or career pathway to date. We understand that a student's potential can be shown in many ways and we strive to recruit students from all backgrounds, and support them on their scientific journey.

ACCE has recently undertaken a project to empirically determine underrepresented groups within our recruitment, and will continue to update our recruitment and PhD procedures accordingly; please see [Dr Rachael McLaughlin's report on our website](#). Supervisors will be notified of any relevant changes and the ACCE website will continue to be updated with the latest information and guidance.

Stipend, fees and Research Training Support Grant

Student stipends are paid at the UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Stipend rate. For 2024/25 this is £19,237 (see [UKRI stipend details](#)). The UKRI Indicative Fee Level for 2024/25 is £4,786.

Research Training Support Grant (RTSG). The normal 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 Team can assist with any queries (accedtpfinance@liverpool.ac.uk).

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 funded research placements to broaden their experiences and help with future career planning, and research lab visits (RLVs) to receive project-specific training during their studentships. 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

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. Details of the 2024 Annual Conference have been circulated to supervisors by the student committee.

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 students are contacted directly when registrations open for each event, 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 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 UKRI website: <https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/available/postgrad/focused/industrial-case/>.

Please note that for 2025/26 onwards, the CASE guidelines are changing, and organisations are not required to provide financial support, although we do of course welcome such support. Full details of current requirements and requirements from 2025/26 onwards are available at the [UKRI NERC webpages](#).

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 services available 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](#).

Updated details on [sickness absence and annual leave](#) for students is also available on the ACCE DTP website.

The DTP operates a [general funding extension application scheme](#), considering applications for a funding extension on a case-by-case basis, that any ACCE DTP student may apply to if severe unforeseen circumstances have disrupted their work (this can include personal difficulties and poor health, including conditions associated with long covid). Normally applications to the scheme are considered from students in years 3 and 4.

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 or a representative, reviews all submission details before they are uploaded to Je-S.

Key contacts

DTP director

Professor Andy Fenton – a.fenton@liverpool.ac.uk

Institutional leads

University of Liverpool: Dr Stephen Cornell – scornell@liverpool.ac.uk

University of Sheffield: Dr Karl Evans – karl.evans@sheffield.ac.uk

University of York: Professor Lisa Emberson – l.emberson@york.ac.uk

Natural History Museum: Dr Helen Robertson – helen.robertson@nhm.ac.uk

UK CEH: Dr Helen Hesketh – hhesketh@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

Sarah Morrison, Finance Administrator

To contact the DTP team, email: acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk or call 0151 795 1227. For ACCE finance queries please contact us at accedtpfinance@liverpool.ac.uk.

Useful links

ACCE DTP website – www.accedtp.ac.uk

X 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/>