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ACCE+ DLA Studentship Handbook 2026/27

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Introduction to ACCE+ DLA

The Addressing the Challenges of Changing Environments Doctoral Landscape Award (ACCE+ DLA) is a partnership between the Universities of Liverpool, Sheffield and York, the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), Natural History Museum London (NHM), and the National Oceanography Centre (NOC), providing doctoral training across the NERC remit. The breadth and depth of expertise across ACCE+ facilitates innovative interdisciplinary training opportunities. Coherence and integration across disciplines is ensured by a common focus of all ACCE+ projects on addressing globally important questions relating to environmental change.

ACCE+ doctoral students are supported by the complementary strengths of world class environmental scientists from all ACCE partners, as well as external organisations from the public and private sectors.

ACCE+ doctoral students will undertake a bespoke training programme and at least one placement during their studentship.

ACCE+ studentship projects span the whole of NERC's remit, helping to deliver transformative research which addresses globally important questions about the causes and consequences of environmental change. ACCE+ projects are selected, and connected, by their adherence to the **ACCE+ framework for project development**:

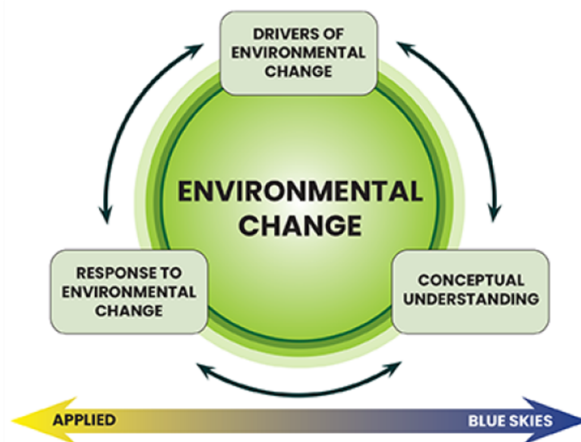


UNIVERSITY
of York



Natural
History
Museum





Environmental Change: Determine how the Earth's magnetic field has changed over 100 myr from natural magnetic records in rocks

Drivers:	Concepts:	Responses:
How do the dynamics and evolution of Earth's core and mantle drive changes?	How do rocks preserve signals of geomagnetic changes through time and how can these be recovered?	How do the atmosphere and biosphere respond to changes in shielding from solar wind radiation? How could future changes affect society?

Impact plan: Placement with Magnetic Measurements Ltd testing a prototype commercial magnetometer

Environmental Change: Evaluate how varying pathogen traits determine the emergence and impact of a devastating pathogen under future climate change scenarios

Drivers:	Concepts:	Responses:
How do changing temperatures impact pathogen survival, transmission and impact on hosts?	How do pathogen traits scale up to influence epidemiological dynamics?	What impact will newly emerging pathogens have on host communities, and can we predict at-risk species under climate change?

Impact plan: Published article on *TheConversation.org* explaining epidemiological dynamics

Environmental Change: Assess how changing levels of air pollution will limit the effectiveness of carbon sequestration potential in UK forests

Drivers:	Concepts:	Responses:
How will drivers that cause emissions of air pollution and GHGs lead to abiotic stress affecting forest growth?	How are forest growth dynamics affected by abiotic stressors over their lifetime?	How can we account for pollution and climate when calculating C sequestration capacity for net zero targets?

Impact plan: Placement with The Woodland Trust assessing the effectiveness of a public campaign



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ACCE+ training programme

ACCE+ offers a bespoke training programme for its students. Training for ACCE+ students includes:

Year 1:

- Ethics and Responsible Research – *delivered by colleagues at the National Oceanography Centre (NOC)*
- Open and Reproducible Research
- Mental Health
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – *student-led training*
- CV Development
- Public Engagement – *delivered by colleagues at Natural History Museum London (NHM)*
- Cross-disciplinary Networking

Year 2:

- Skills and Career Mapping
- Policy
- Interdisciplinary Global Challenge

Year 3:

- Applications and interviews
- Dragon's Den
- Writing Retreat – *optional training for ACCE+ students*

Yearly:

- Conference and Away Day – *led by the student committee.*

In addition to the ACCE+ training programme, students will benefit from training sessions (such as quantitative skills training) delivered by colleagues at their home institution (Liverpool, York or Sheffield Universities). Unless noted otherwise, ACCE+ expects all students to undertake the ACCE+ training sessions once during their studentship, normally in the year indicated above, although there is some flexibility in when students undertake each training event. Students will be informed about training events well in advance and will be invited to register for each event. The costs of holding and facilitating the events are taken from the ACCE+ Training Grant, and students normally only need to cover the costs of travel and any accommodation required, from their RTSG funds.

The training calendar for ACCE+ is available on the [ACCE training webpages](#).

ACCE+ placements

ACCE+ offers students the opportunity to undertake placements. **Placements undertaken should not involve working on the PhD project.** The placements may of course be related to the project in theme, and the outputs of the placements may be informed by the PhD project work. Similarly, skills placements may result in newly acquired skills that can be applied to the PhD project, but **work conducted during the placement itself should not feature in the final PhD thesis.**





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There are two types of placement in ACCE+:

- **Bridge placement.** This is a compulsory placement for all students (minimum one month) that creates bridges between academic research and public engagement. These placements should produce a tangible outcome, e.g. large-scale outreach events; policy briefing note; or a commercialisation plan.
Your CASE placement can count as your bridge placement if you are undertaking a CASE studentship.
- **Skills placement*.** This is an optional placement for students (one to two months) and can follow one of two pathways:
 - **CV enhancement:** students gain skills beyond their PhD area, enhancing interdisciplinarity and employability. Placements generate a discrete outcome of strategic relevance to the placement host partner;
 - **PhD skills placement:** this is training within another research group, developing skills required to pursue exciting novel research directions arising as studentships progress.

The total placement time for students is a maximum of three months.

*For international students, there may be some restrictions on completing optional skills placements. Please contact your local ACCE+ lead (see the *ACCE+ partner universities and contacts* section) for further information.

Students undertaking any placement (maximum three months as noted above) will receive additional stipend and tuition fee support up to the three-month maximum. Students may also apply for additional funds, for example for travel and accommodation costs whilst on placement; where possible ACCE+ encourages placement hosts to contribute to these incidental costs.

Students will need to complete a placement application form before they undertake a placement (the form is available on the [ACCE+ placements webpage](#)) in order to gain approval to complete the placement/s from the ACCE+ Management Board. Students will normally complete their placement/s in year 2 or 3 of their studentship. ACCE+ will advertise placement opportunities it is made aware of, at the [ACCE+ placement opportunities webpages](#).

ACCE+ student support and monitoring

Wellbeing

A range of wellbeing services are available for students to access. Please see full details on the [ACCE+ wellbeing webpages](#). The DLA Management Board members and administrative teams can also assist with signposting to services as required.

Additional funding

ACCE+ operates a general funding extension application scheme, for students **facing exceptional circumstances** to apply to in year 3 or 4 of their studentship (when there will be a clearer picture of impact on student progression). Funding extensions (to include stipend and fees funding for an additional period, normally three or six months) are considered by the Management Board on a case-by-case basis. **ACCE+ students may apply to this scheme if severe,**





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unforeseen circumstances have disrupted their work; this can include personal difficulties and health related difficulties.

Additional funds may also be made available to support students in any year who have caring responsibilities or adjustments to attend training activities, e.g. contributing to childcare allowing students with caring responsibilities to attend events requiring an overnight stay, or additional accommodation if dependents need to travel with a student. Please contact acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk for further details.

Publishing your research

Publishing costs are normally covered by a separate UKRI grant awarded to each ACCE institution. Please contact acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk or your local ACCE+ lead for more information. UKRI ask that funding be acknowledged when publishing research papers, normally with the wording: *This work was supported by the Addressing the Challenges of Changing Environments (ACCE+ DLA) funded by Natural Environment Research Council [grant number...]*.

The ACCE+ DLA grant number is **UKRI1351** (for students starting in October 2025 and later).

The ACCE+ DLA logo, in various colourways, is available for you to use for conference posters and presentations. Please see the details on the [ACCE+ website logos page](#).

Record of Activity and outputs monitoring

ACCE+ students are required to maintain details of all activities undertaken during their studentship, for the DLA as well as for their home institution progression processes. Each year a DLA Record of Activity form will be circulated for all students to complete details for the DLA. Some anonymised examples from the Record of Activity submissions (for example publications, conferences attended) may be included in ACCE+'s annual report to NERC. In addition to the yearly report, students should routinely inform ACCE+ of outputs such as papers, conference presentations, outreach participation and other significant outputs. These can be reported to ACCE+ via a dedicated Google submission form that will be circulated via email at the same time as the Record of Activity request.

Funding and costs

Stipend and fees

ACCE+ studentships cover the standard student stipend ([as set by UKRI](#)) and home tuition fees paid directly to their University for 3.5 years. International students normally receive a partial fee waiver so that they only need to pay home tuition fees only; home fees are paid in full by the Training Grant. The exact mechanism for the international fee waiver varies at each ACCE+ partner.

Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)

Each ACCE+ student will receive an RTSG budget as part of their studentship. As ACCE+ projects are not all similar (for example, some are computational based-only and some involve extensive fieldwork), projects have one of three different RTSG levels. The primary supervisor will be able to advise the exact RTSG available for the project. This budget is decided and approved by the Management Board at the project development stage and has been confirmed by supervisors as sufficient for achieving the proposed research. **ACCE+ does not provide additional funds for research costs or conference attendance.**





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RTSG is a contribution towards costs incurred during the studentship; for example, lab consumables, small equipment, travel, accommodation and conference attendance. If a standard laptop is not provided by the home institution, one may be purchased using RTSG funds.

CASE projects

If a student is studying on a CASE project with an external CASE partner, the CASE partner must host the student for a minimum of three months during the studentship. This placement does not need to occur in one single period. CASE partners are encouraged to make a financial contribution to the project including covering any costs incurred by the student when visiting and working within the CASE partner's establishment.

Disabled Students Allowance

Disabled students allowance (DSA) is a UKRI-specific scheme intended to help with additional expenditure for the cost of study-related requirements that may be incurred as a result of disability, mental health issues or specific learning difficulties that means additional support is needed to undertake a PhD studentship. The allowances can cover the cost of non-medical personal assistance, items or specialist equipment or software, extra travel costs or general expenses. The host University will undertake an assessment of need (normally accessed via the University's central disability service) and provide details of costs for the student via its recommendations at the end of the assessment. ACCE+ will then be able to cover those costs and will claim back all eligible costs from NERC at the end of each academic year.

Students should contact the relevant disability advisor or team at their University for advice:

University of Sheffield: disability.info@sheffield.ac.uk

University of Liverpool: dsteam@liv.ac.uk

University of York: disabilityservices@york.ac.uk

Additional guidance is available on the [UKRI website](#), including the UKRI [DSA framework](#).

ACCE+ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

ACCE+ is committed to recruiting and supporting students 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.

ACCE DTP was awarded a Flexible Funding award from NERC in 2022, and has undertaken an assessment of the impact of changes made in 2021/22 to its recruitment practices, and explored further changes to be implemented in ACCE+ recruitment from 2024/25 entry onwards. Full details plus a copy of the report written by ACCE's former EDI Analyst Dr Rachael McLaughlin, are available on the [ACCE EDI webpages](#).

Home institution information

Depending on a student's home institution (Liverpool, York or Sheffield), there are various procedures in place for student progression, annual monitoring, training needs analysis and similar. All ACCE+ students will receive information directly from their home institution regarding such processes.





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Student representatives

ACCE+ supports a student representative scheme, allowing students to represent their cohort and attend Management Board meetings, as well as taking an active part in arranging events such as the annual ACCE+ conference. If you are interested in becoming a student representative, please contact us at acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk.

ACCE+ partner universities and contacts

Institutions

University of Liverpool

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

- [Institute of Infection, Veterinary and Ecological Sciences](#)
- [Institute of Life Course and Medical Sciences](#)
- [Institute of Systems, Molecular and Integrative Biology](#)
- [Institute of Population Health](#)

Faculty of Science and Engineering

- [School of Environmental Sciences](#)

University of Sheffield

- [School of Biosciences](#)
- [School of Geography and Planning](#)
- [School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences](#)
- [Faculty of Social Sciences](#)

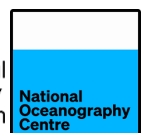
University of York

- [Department of Biology](#)
- [Department of Environment and Geography](#)
- [Department of Archaeology](#)
- [Department of Chemistry](#)

[UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology \(UK CEH\)](#)

[Natural History Museum London \(NHM\)](#)

[National Oceanography Centre \(NOC\)](#)





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ACCE+ Management Board Key Contacts

University of Liverpool – Professor Wayne Dawson (**ACCE+ DLA Director**), Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. Email: wayne.dawson@liverpool.ac.uk

Dr Katy Chamberlain (ACCE+ FSE lead), Faculty of Science and Engineering. Email: k.j.chamberlain@liverpool.ac.uk

University of Sheffield – Dr Karl Evans (ACCE+ Sheffield lead), School of Biosciences. Email:

karl.evans@sheffield.ac.uk

Dr Ellie Harrison (ACCE+ EDI lead), School of Biosciences. Email: ellie.harrison@sheffield.ac.uk

University of York – Professor Lisa Emberson (Department of Environment and Geography) and Dr Kelly Redeker (Department of Biology) (ACCE+ York leads). Email: l.emberson@york.ac.uk and kelly.redeker@york.ac.uk

UKCEH – Dr Helen Hesketh (ACCE+ UKCEH lead). Email: hhesketh@ceh.ac.uk

NHM – Dr Helen Robertson (ACCE+ NHM lead). Email: Helen.Robertson@nhm.ac.uk

NOC – Dr Michela de Dominicis (ACCE+ NOC lead). Email: micdom@noc.ac.uk

Administrative contacts

University of Liverpool (lead partner)

Carolyn O’Leary (ACCE+ manager); Emma Robertson (ACCE+ deputy manager); John Donnelly
Email: acce.dtp@liverpool.ac.uk

Web and social media

ACCE+ website: <https://accedtp.ac.uk/>

Bluesky: @acce-dla.bsky.social



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