

NERC STUDENTSHIP HANDBOOK

2010/11

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STUDENTSHIPS – 2010/2011

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This handbook sets out the terms and conditions of the different types of studentships, which are administered by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). NERC will be glad to give any further information by letter, telephone or e-mail.

Studentships are awarded to university departments, research institutes or other approved institutions, which are referred throughout this document as Research Organisation.

All enquiries concerning NERC Studentships should be addressed to:

Training Awards Team
Natural Environment Research Council
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon SN2 1EU
Fax: 01793 411560

For up-to-date telephone and email contacts please refer to the NERC website at:

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/contacts.asp>

Please Note: Studentships are not awarded directly by NERC to individual students. If you are seeking a studentship place with an award you should address enquiries about the specific availability of places or the content of research training to the Research Organisation in which you would like to do your research training.

Disclaimer

NERC reserves the right to change these regulations at any time without prior notification. The regulations governing all NERC studentships at any time are those in the most recent version of this handbook, available on the NERC website at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/studentships/>

Major changes to note from the previous edition:

NERC now funds all studentships through Training Grants (Doctoral - DTGs and Masters - MTGs) and no longer funds students directly. The handbook has now been updated substantially to reflect this change and also to reduce duplication of information where possible.

Information previously in Section F has been moved into Section C

Sections D and E have now been combined into a single section dealing with financial conditions for PhD studentships.

Section E now deals with financial conditions for masters studentships

The Terms and Conditions for Training Grants have been revised and will apply to Training Grants from 1 April 2010. The revised version is at section G of this handbook.

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Section A – INTRODUCTION – TYPES OF AWARDS AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Purpose

1. The aim of the Natural Environment Research Council's (NERC) postgraduate training awards schemes is to provide the trained people required to sustain environmental research and development in the research base, public sector and industry. NERC's postgraduate awards provide opportunities for early career researchers to continue their training beyond a first degree in all scientific areas set out in the NERC mission (<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/about/work/mission.asp>)
2. The research topic must be concerned with the scientific aspects of the natural environment, and must fall within the NERC remit. NERC wishes to encourage broad-based training including reference to economic and social factors in appropriate cases. It also, particularly wishes to encourage links with public or private sector partners where partners will play a part in the training of the student (see CASE studentships below). Topics with objectives, which are predominantly economic, social, medical or agricultural, should be referred to the appropriate research council, or a Government Department/Agency for support. The research topic must be well defined with 'researchable' questions or hypotheses and include appropriate methodology and a feasible plan of action that offers genuine scope for doctoral research and innovative science.

Types of Award and Application Procedures

3. Research (PhD) Studentships - These awards are normally made for a minimum period of three years, and enable postgraduate students to receive training in research methods and to undertake a programme of research in a specific scientific area under the guidance of one or more named supervisors. It is expected that the awards will lead to the submission of a thesis and the award of a PhD. There are four main types of NERC PhD Studentships, which are allocated through different mechanisms:
 - Algorithm/Quota Studentships – the majority of NERC PhD studentships (Approximately 240 pa) are allocated to Research Organisations using an algorithm, more details of which can be found at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/schemes/algorithm.asp>.
 - Open CASE Studentships - The Open CASE scheme is aimed at promoting collaborations between research organisations and public and private sector partners. Open CASE studentships are awarded in a separate yearly competition and details are posted on the website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/using/schemes/case.asp>. Proposals should be submitted via the Je-S system as detailed on the website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/howtoapply.asp>.
 - Directed Studentships – PhD Studentships may also be awarded in defined research areas as part of some NERC research programmes and cross-research council programmes. There may be single or multiple calls under a programme for suitable studentship projects. Calls will be announced on the NERC website. Proposals should be submitted via the Je-S system as detailed on the website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/howtoapply.asp>.
 - Project Studentships – A Research Grant may also include funding for one or more project students. The student's research project will be closely associated with the work carried out in the grant, but in all other respects the department must make the same level of provision for training and supervision that would be expected for any other NERC research student. The award includes the maintenance grant and university fees paid at 100% FEC. All other costs should also be requested on the grant proposal and will be funded at 80% FEC. An application for a project studentship should be submitted with the research grant proposal (see the NERC Research Grant Handbook for closing dates). It is expected that the studentship award will start around the same time as the grant. Investigators at eligible Northern Ireland institutions may seek project studentships as part of a research grant proposal and such studentships will be awarded and funded by NERC rather than the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI).
4. Joint ESRC/NERC studentships – Around twenty new interdisciplinary research studentships are jointly-funded each year by the NERC and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The studentships are awarded in a separate competition and successful students are subject to the terms and conditions of ESRC studentships, which may vary slightly from those in this handbook. Full details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/schemes/jointesrc.asp>.
5. Masters Studentships are awarded to postgraduate students taking courses recognised by NERC that lead to an MSc or Research Masters (MRes) qualification. These awards are generally for a maximum duration of one year. The awards provide graduates with opportunities to proceed directly into employment or to doctoral study. Masters studentships are not an automatic prerequisite for doctoral study. Successful courses receive support for a number of studentships via a flexible Masters Training Grant (MTG).

CASE Studentships

6. NERC is keen to encourage collaboration with public and private sector partners. The Co-operative Awards in Science and Engineering (CASE) scheme aims to promote partnerships between HEIs and other bodies, which will enhance the training received by the student and will help the student to gain first-hand experience of work outside the purely academic environment. CASE awards involve the joint supervision of the student by a member of staff of an academic institution and a scientist from industry, business, commerce or a public sector research institute. Any industrial organisation or institution within the public sector that has research interests in NERC's remit is eligible to co-operate with Research Organisations in the standard CASE scheme. This includes private industry, the research organisations of the nationalised industries, public bodies such as regional water companies, county planning offices and government research institutes, and similar overseas bodies. Any studentship awarded through the algorithm may be taken up as a CASE award. A project or directed studentship may also be held as a CASE award.
7. CASE projects must provide a sound training in the methods of research and a stimulating intellectual challenge for a student. An essential requirement is that students will spend a part of their training period with the co-operating body. This period must be a minimum of three months, but this could be spread over the period of the studentship and would not normally exceed eighteen months. Both academic Research Organisations and co-operating bodies will be required to nominate supervisors who will be responsible for overseeing students' training.
8. The CASE partner must supplement the student's maintenance grant by paying at least £1,000 pa for three years. It is the obligation of the CASE partner to agree this additional funding before the start of the studentship. Other terms and conditions should also be agreed with both the student and the awarding Research Organisation prior to commencement of the studentship. It is expected that cooperating bodies will meet the extra expenses incurred by students visiting and working in their establishments. Co-operating bodies are also expected to contribute in cash or in kind towards necessary materials or facilities not possessed by the Research Organisation concerned.
9. NERC is seeking to promote the partnership and benefits of CASE studentships. For departments in receipt of NERC algorithm studentships, around 30% of these studentships in any three year period are expected to be CASE awards. Studentships may be converted to CASE awards during the studentship, as long as the CASE requirements are met. CASE partner details should be entered onto the Je-S Studentship Details Portal (SDP).

Section B - STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS (All Types of Award)

Introduction

10. The Research Organisation (university department or research institute) is responsible for **selecting** an eligible student for any NERC studentship award. However, the university at which the student will be registered has sole responsibility for assessing and confirming student eligibility to hold a NERC award against the criteria detailed in this Section.
11. **Heads of Departments, prospective supervisors and potential students needing advice on eligibility should contact the Registrars Office in the first instance.** Where there is doubt about an individual's eligibility for a NERC studentship the Registrar should contact the NERC Training Awards Team. Whilst general advice can be given over the telephone, a formal decision will not be given without full written details of the candidate's academic qualifications and residency situation on the student eligibility form, available at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/studentships/>, along with a copy of their *Curriculum Vitae*.
12. The university are confirming that they have checked the eligibility of the student, when submitting the students details via Je-S. NERC reserves the right to exclude nominated students whom it considers to be ineligible and the final decision on a student's eligibility rests with NERC. **Where students are funded from Training Grants, NERC will monitor adherence to the eligibility requirements and may stop payments if the students receiving NERC funding are not eligible under these requirements.**

Residence

13. The legal basis for defining residence eligibility for postgraduate training awards is set down in the *Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1997¹*. Candidates for awards must have a relevant connection with the United Kingdom. A relevant connection may be established if:
 - The candidate has been ordinarily resident in the UK throughout the 3-year period preceding the date of application for an award, **and**
 - Has not been resident in the UK, during any part of that 3-year period wholly or mainly for the purposes of full time education, **and**
 - Has settled status in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971 (i.e. is not subject to any restriction on the period for which he/she may stay).
14. A relevant connection may be established for an EU student if the candidate has been ordinarily resident in the UK throughout the 3-year period preceding the date of application for an award (including for full-time education).
15. British citizens are not subject to immigration control but only those other nationals who have been granted written permission to stay in the UK permanently are settled.

Temporary absence

16. A UK citizen may have spent an extended period living outside the UK, either for study or employment.
17. Most candidates in these circumstances will be able to show that they have maintained a relevant connection with their home country and therefore claim that the absence was temporary. "Temporary" does not depend solely on the length of the absence.
18. For the purposes of eligibility, a period of ordinary residence will not be treated as being interrupted by an absence which is caused by:
 - The temporary absence abroad, by reasons of training or employment, of the candidate, the candidate's spouse or parents, or
 - The temporary full time education abroad of the candidate or spouse.
19. An expatriate, or the child of an expatriate, who may have been born in the UK or abroad, and appears to have returned to the UK for full time education, is required to establish temporary absence. In order to be eligible, it must be shown that:
 - The absence abroad was involuntary, and attempts were made to remedy the breach with the UK at

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¹ The education (Fees and Award) regulations 2007. Statutory Instrument 2007 No. 779.

the earliest opportunity

- There was no individual intention to sever links with the UK, and
- Links have been maintained or re-established through visits, vacation work and subsequent re-settlement in the UK.

20. It should be noted that anyone who is resident in a country is normally subject to the residence and tax conditions of that country. A resident may or may not acquire other rights by virtue of living there, but birth or long-term residence does not automatically confer similar rights to citizens of that country. If a candidate has opted for full citizenship of a country other than the UK, then it should be assumed that the candidate will be ineligible.

Indefinite Leave to Remain

21. Candidates who have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILTR) by the Home Office have been given the right to reside in the UK, and thus have settled status. ILTR is usually given to those who have already spent a period in the UK, and are looking to take up British Citizenship. A candidate who holds ILTR must nevertheless establish a relevant connection as set out in the introduction above.

Refugees, Humanitarian Protection and Discretionary Leave

22. A candidate who has been granted full refugee status by the Home Office, or is the child or spouse of a refugee, has settled status and is eligible on residence grounds, provided that he/she has not ceased to be resident since being granted asylum or refugee status. Such candidates must provide documentary evidence of their status, usually in the form of a letter from the Home Office, UK Border Agency. Refugees do not have to meet the requirement of three years' residence.

23. Candidates who are 'asylum seekers' are required to demonstrate settled status to be eligible.

24. Candidates who have not been recognised by the Home Office as meeting the terms of the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees may be granted Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary leave. The granting of Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave circumstances make it impossible for him/her to return home at that time. Thus, the holder will normally be allowed to stay in the UK for three years. After this the award will be actively reviewed. Also, he/she is entitled to work in the UK and claim unemployment benefit and, after a certain period of residence, may be able to apply for ILTR, and subsequently British Citizenship.

25. Candidates who have been granted Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary leave do not have the same entitlements as refugees. They will, however, be eligible on residence grounds if they have spent the previous three years in the UK, not wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full time education.

Visas, Work Permits etc

26. Candidates who are resident in the UK on a student visa, work permit or dependant visa have restrictions on the time they may stay in the UK and cannot demonstrate a relevant connection or settled status. They will not therefore be eligible on residence grounds.

Fees-only Awards

27. Candidates from EU countries other than the UK are generally eligible (subject to their eligibility on grounds of academic qualifications) for awards restricted to the payment of tuition fees only and no maintenance award. For new students starting from October 2006, NERC will also pay the Research Training Support Grant, conference attendance and costs for fieldwork and consumables. In order to be eligible for a fees-only award, a candidate must be ordinarily resident in a member state of the EU, in the same way as UK candidates must be ordinarily resident in the UK.

28. Currently, the member states of the Economic Union are as follows:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Denmark²

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² **Greenland** and the **Faroe Islands** are not part of the EU

- Finland
- France ³
- Germany ⁴
- Greece
- Ireland
- Italy
- Luxembourg
- The Netherlands ⁵
- Portugal ⁶
- Romania
- Spain ⁷
- Sweden
- Cyprus
- The Czech Republic
- Estonia
- Hungary
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Malta
- Poland
- The Slovak Republic
- Slovenia

29. Gibraltar is part of the EU, and students from Gibraltar are to be treated as other EU nationals.
30. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not part of the EU (see below). The UK Dependent Territories are also not part of the EU. The independent states of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and The Vatican are not part of the European Union.
31. The implementation of the Switzerland Agreement means that permanent residence in Switzerland is no longer a bar to EU nationals being classed as “EU Students”. Swiss nationals do not qualify to be considered as EU students.

Migrant Workers

32. Articles 7 (2) and Article 12 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1612/68 allow for candidates who have established a relevant connection with a member state of the EU to be eligible for a full award to include maintenance, as ‘migrant workers’, in that member state. A migrant worker can be defined as an EU citizen that is employed in a member state of the EU who should be treated as a national of that member state. Similarly, a child or spouse of a migrant worker is also eligible to be treated in the same way. However, the following conditions should be met:
- The employment should be full-time and of significant duration. Therefore, a candidate engaged in part-time or short-term casual employment, or who has been effectively unemployed, cannot be considered to hold migrant worker status. Additionally, the employment should normally be expected to be relevant to the candidate’s previous or future course of study, although employment of a ‘professional’ nature should be considered on its merits.
 - The employment should not be considered to be ancillary i.e. taken up with a view towards engaging in subsequent studies (job and study are a package), or subject to the candidate being accepted for the training for which he/she is to be nominated. An example of this would be a candidate who has been

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³ The French Overseas Departments (DOMs) of **Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guyana**, and **Reunion** are part of Metropolitan France, and the treaties apply. However, French Overseas Territories (TOMs) e.g. **French Polynesia**, are not part of the EU.

⁴ **Heligoland**, although a tax free port, is part of the EU.

⁵ The **Netherlands Antilles** are not part of the EU.

⁶ **Madeira** and **The Azores** are part of the EU under special terms. **Macao** is not part of the EU.

⁷ The **Balearic Islands**, the **Canary Islands**, **Ceuta** and **Melilla** are all part of the EU.

employed as a Research Assistant in a Research Organisation department where a future award is to be held.

33. With regard to the children of migrant workers (Article 12), it must be shown that the candidate's residence is as a consequence of the parent's past or present employment. A child who has not been resident in the UK during the parent's employment, or departed with the parent at the cessation of that employment, will not be eligible to claim migrant worker status.

Candidates from European Economic Area (EEA) Member States

34. The arrangements for migrant workers are also extended to candidates who are nationals of the EEA member states of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Where such candidates meet the migrant worker requirements they will be eligible for full awards. However, as these countries are not member states of the EU, candidates will be ineligible for fees-only awards.

Northern Ireland

35. The Research Councils have the responsibility for making postgraduate awards to Northern Ireland domiciled students who wish to undertake postgraduate study at a higher education institution in Great Britain. Similarly, the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI) is responsible for making awards to GB-domiciled students who wish to undertake postgraduate study at a university in Northern Ireland.
36. Candidates from Great Britain and Northern Ireland who wish to undertake postgraduate study at a Northern Ireland university should apply to DENI, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down, Northern Ireland, BT19 2PR for details of application procedures and closing dates.
37. However, Investigators at eligible Northern Ireland institutions may seek project studentships as part of a research grant proposal and such studentships will be awarded and funded by NERC rather than the DENI.

Channel Islands & Isle of Man

38. Students who are ordinarily resident in the Channel Islands are now eligible for a full award.
Students who are ordinarily resident in the Isle of Man should apply to their Education Authority viz:
a) The Isle of Man, Department of Education, Murray House, Mount Havelock, Douglas, IM1 2SG.
39. **NOTE:** A candidate from the Isle of Man will not have established eligibility for a NERC award through any period of residence in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland during which he or she has been in full-time education.

Academic Qualifications

40. Candidates must hold an honours degree in an appropriate branch of science or technology. For research studentships (PhD/MPhil) this should be a **first or upper second class honours degree**. For an advanced course studentship (MSc) or research masters (MRes) it should be a **first or second class honours degree**. NERC also accepts qualifications, or a combination of qualifications and experience, which demonstrate equivalent ability and attainment. A less than sufficient first degree may be enhanced to meet the requirements by the acquisition of:
- a) a Masters degree to enhance the first degree by one step, e.g. from 2(ii) to 2 (i) and/or
 - b) Substantial relevant postgraduate work experience, i.e. a minimum of two and a half years full time equivalent to enhance a degree by one step, five years equivalent to enhance by two steps. The postgraduate work experience must relate to the discipline of the first degree, a subsequent Masters degree or the intended area of postgraduate study.
41. NERC does not need to see copies of qualification certificates. **It is the responsibility of the registering institution to verify that candidates possess the relevant qualifications. They are also responsible for ensuring that qualifications obtained outside the UK are of an equivalent level to those quoted above.**

Previous Study

42. Studentships should not normally be awarded to students who have already had a period of full-time postgraduate training at the same or higher level, or employment that is the equivalent of such training, unless support for them would clearly represent a good investment of public funds. The Research Organisation are responsible for deciding whether further support for an individual would represent good investment of public funds, taking into account the individual circumstances and the other applicants for the limited NERC support.

Section C – GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS (All Types of Award)

General Conditions

43. Applications are accepted, and awards made, on the understanding that institutions, supervisors and students accept the terms and conditions set out in this Handbook and any amendments or additions that may be announced subsequently.
44. The Research Organisation where awards are held must provide students with all the services, facilities and materials necessary for their training, including an appropriate level of access to computing facilities. NERC does not, therefore, fund requests for purchase of equipment or the use of non-NERC services or facilities to support research training. Nor should students be expected to purchase personal computers to enable them to carry out their research training.
45. The Research Organisation where awards are held is responsible for day-to-day management of safety in the student's work area. The student's supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the work is subjected to risk assessment and that any required risk management is implemented and monitored. The student is responsible for following safety guidance and instruction issued by the Institution.
46. It is a condition of award that NERC accepts no liability for the manner in which the work connected with the award is undertaken. The recipient of an award is responsible in all respects for the work and its consequences.
47. NERC adopted an ethics policy in June 2005. This sets out guiding principles which provide the ethical framework that we aspire to in all aspects of our work. We expect those who receive funding from us to respect the policy. The policy and additional information can be found on the website at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/publications/corporate/ethics.asp>
48. Alternative methods and techniques should be investigated before it is decided to use animals in experiments. All pertinent regulations for the use of animals must be observed. The Research Organisation is responsible for ensuring that the establishment, research workers and experiment possess the appropriate Home Office licences plus any further permits, or authorisation, that are needed to conform to local bye-laws or other appropriate legislation. Supervisors may be asked by NERC to confirm possession of appropriate experiment licences before a student's research commences.
49. NERC strongly encourages students to ensure that collections of specimens obtained whilst undertaking their research projects are adequately curated. This ensures the preservation of a representative collection of specimens and provides the student with training in curatorial methods.

Place of Tenure

50. Research studentships may be held in any institution of higher education in the UK acceptable to NERC. NERC reserves the right to determine the places that are best fitted to provide the training required by students. Studentships tenable at UK Research Organisations may be held partially overseas.
51. In particular, NERC wishes to ensure that some postgraduate students undertake part of their training at universities or institutes overseas. It therefore encourages awards that include spells of the order of six months to one year to be spent at those institutions.

Studentship Duration

52. Studentships should be funded for between three and four years (FTE). The duration of individual awards can be decided at the start or during the studentship as long as clear, transparent rules are in place. A studentship could be funded from more than one DTG, both concurrently (e.g. 50% funding from NERC and EPSRC) and over the course of the studentship (e.g. the latter part of the studentship could be funded from a subsequent DTG).

Data and Statistics

53. NERC will require data on all NERC students (funded on MTGs, DTGs and research grants) to be submitted within a month of the student starting their studies, via the Je-S Studentship Details Portal (SDP). Further information on how to submit student details can be found via the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/student.asp>. Future MTG/DTG payments will be stopped if appropriate details are not submitted to NERC.
54. 2007 students will be responsible for maintaining their contact details via their Je-S student account. E-mail addresses for other NERC funded students will be collected via the Je-S Studentship Details Portal and should be kept up to date. Where the e-mail address changes for students starting prior to 2007, an

updated e-mail address should be sent to trainingawardsteam@nerc.ac.uk.

55. NERC expects a research student to submit a thesis no later than four years after the start of the studentship, except where they have had an abeyance period (e.g. for maternity or illness) or have changed to part-time working, when the expected submission date can be extended accordingly. The submission of a thesis is seen as an essential part of a research student's training and as a means of ensuring that research work undertaken is made available to other scientists. NERC collects submission data from Universities on an annual basis. Submission data for all NERC-funded students will now be collected via the Je-S PhD/Masters Submissions Survey. Further information on how to submit student details can be found via the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/student.asp>.
56. NERC also requires universities to provide data on the first employment destinations of all NERC-funded students. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on behalf of all the research councils now collects destination data and universities should ensure that they complete the research council funding fields accurately.

Review and Renewal of Awards- Annual Student Report (ASR) Forms

57. From 2009, NERC discontinued the annual student report exercise. Most updates should now be made via the Je-S Studentship Details Portal. Supervisors and students can still contact NERC directly where required.

Income Tax

58. Payments made as part of a NERC studentship are not regarded as income for income tax purposes. Students should note, however, that earnings received during the final year from sources such as teaching and demonstrating should be aggregated with income from post-award employment when assessing income tax liability for the tax year in which the award ends.

National Insurance

59. NERC will not make any payment for students' National Insurance contributions. Students should consider whether they wish to pay contributions as non-employed persons. They should consult their local office of the Department for Work and Pensions (formerly the Department of Social Security) about their position to determine the effect of non-payment of contributions on any future claims for benefit. Students may become liable for contributions in connection with any paid teaching or demonstrating which they undertake.

Maternity and Adoptive Leave

60. NERC students are entitled to 26 weeks paid maternity leave and up to a further 26 weeks unpaid leave. The studentship would be put into abeyance during that period. Where the student wishes to return on a part-time basis that is acceptable to NERC as long as it is at least 50% FTE. The studentship end dates and expected submission dates should be amended on the Je-S SDP to reflect periods of maternity leave or changes in working patterns. The same entitlement applies for adoptive leave. Extra costs for maternity or adoptive leave should be taken from the Training Grant, where possible, or requested as part of the grant reconciliation process.

Paternity Leave

61. A total of ten days paternity leave may be taken at any time during a partner's pregnancy or within three months following the birth. No extra funding will be provided.

Sick Leave

62. Within any twelve-month period, NERC would pay for absences covered by medical certificates for up to 13 weeks. For longer periods of illness the studentship could be put into abeyance. The studentship end dates and expected submission dates should be amended on the Je-S SDP to reflect periods of paid sick leave or abeyance. Extra costs for sick leave should be taken from the Training Grant, where possible, or requested as part of the grant reconciliation process.

Disabled Student's Allowance

63. If a student has a long-term disability, and as a result of that disability they are obliged to incur additional expenditure in connection with their studies, they may be eligible for extra allowances, known as Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). All research council funded students are eligible for these allowances. Disabled Students' Allowance covers costs relating to additional general expenses, items of equipment, or non-medical assistance during the term of the studentship. Research councils will consider meeting only those costs that are incurred directly and solely as a consequence of taking up a studentship to pursue postgraduate study.

64. If applying for Disabled Students' Allowance, a student or research organisation should not commit to any expenditure relating to the claim until the research council has sent a formal agreement of the amount of support that it will provide. Research councils will not fund retrospectively for equipment already purchased. Information on how to apply for DSA can be found at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/dsa.asp>. Individuals should contact the Disability Officer at the Research Organisation at which their studentship is registered for assistance with their application.
65. Research Council rates are based on the allowances for undergraduate students in the document: Bridging the Gap: A guide to the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) in higher education. http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation/DG_10034898

Suspension of Awards (Abeyance)

66. NERC expects students to complete their training in a single continuous period and does not encourage the suspension of awards. Any requests for an abeyance should be made to the student's supervisor. The maximum period of suspension should normally be 12 months. Sympathetic consideration should be given to requests for abeyance due to personal or family reasons. The studentship end dates and expected submission dates should be amended on the Je-S SDP to reflect periods of abeyance.

Termination of Studentships

67. The Research Organisation should ensure that the appropriate termination and grievance procedures have been followed before terminating a studentship. Research Organisations are expected to take reasonable steps to recover monies paid to students in advance who leave or whose studentship is terminated. Termination details must be submitted via the Je-S SDP. Any PhD student who terminates after the first 12 months of their award will still be included in the submission data survey.

Holidays

68. Reasonable holidays, not exceeding eight weeks in the year including public holidays, may be allowed by supervisors. Up to a maximum of four weeks holiday may be taken at the end of the period of award.

Demonstrating, Teaching and Other Paid Work

69. NERC encourages students to undertake some teaching or demonstrating work when this is compatible with their training and provided their supervisors approve of this. The total time spent (including preparation and marking) should not exceed six hours in any week during term time. The provision of teaching and demonstrating is the responsibility of the Research Organisation, and so must be paid for at the Research Organisation's usual rate and supported by appropriate training. Students may also undertake a small amount of other paid work, provided the supervisor gives consent to this and it does not delay or interfere with the research training.
70. Students can take up to a three-month abeyance of their award to enable them to undertake a work placement (directly related to the students' training), provided this is well justified and approved in advance by their supervisor and research organisation. The studentship end dates and expected submission dates should be amended on the Je-S SDP to reflect periods of abeyance.

Careers and Transferable Skills Training

71. Vitae is funded by the Research Councils and works with universities and research centres to provide specific support to PhD students and early career researchers. Vitae provides resources, advice, information and fora for individual researchers who are interested in their professional development and careers. See the Vitae website: <http://www.vitae.ac.uk> for more details.
72. NERC also encourages all PhD students to attend a **GRAD School** in either their second or third year. There are a number of different courses available, varying in length, location and content. The number of national courses will be reducing over the next three years, but there will be more local GRAD schools. They can be a good source of transferable skills training. See the Vitae website: <http://www.vitae.ac.uk> for details.
73. NERC believes that all research students should receive appropriate training in technical and personal skills. The Joint Research Councils' Statement on Skills Training Requirements can be found at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/documents/studenttraining.pdf> for guidance. NERC and the other Research Councils provide Research Organisations with extra "Roberts Skills Funding" to implement the Roberts Review recommendation for additional training (mainly in transferable skills) for PhD students. The recommendation is for students to receive around two weeks training per year. More information can be found at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/rcdu/training.htm>.

74. NERC are co-sponsors of 'Researchers in Residence'. This is a scheme open to PhD students who are interested in promoting and explaining science to a wider audience enabling them to spend four days working with children and teachers in schools. Further details can be found at <http://www.researchersinresidence.ac.uk/cms/>.
75. The Science and Engineering Ambassadors (SEAs) Programme aims to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) by proving enthusiastic, vetted volunteers to work with young people and teachers. Further details can be found at: http://www.stemnet.org.uk/ambassadors_seas.cfm.

Section D – FINANCIAL CONDITIONS - PhD Studentships

76. A standard studentship award consists of:
- A maintenance award (stipend), plus London allowance, where applicable
 - University fees
 - A Research Training Support Grant (RTSG), including funding towards with fieldwork, conferences and laboratory consumables expenses.
 - Other allowances, where appropriate, including Disabled Students Allowance (see section C).
77. Funding can either be via a Doctoral Training Grant (DTG) or a research grant (for project students). As of 1 October 2009, any remaining costs for studentships starting in or before 2007 have been transferred onto DTGs. Research Organisations are responsible for paying the student their maintenance grant, which would previously have been paid directly to the student by NERC.
78. Where project students were previously funded directly by NERC, any remaining funding for student maintenance and fees at 1 October 2009 has been transferred to a DTG. All other project-related costs were funded on the research grant.

Maintenance Award

79. The latest Research Council approved minimum rates can be found at:
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/rcdu/postgradtrain.htm>. The annual rates of maintenance award for doctoral students in the academic years 2009/2010 and 2010/11 are:

Academic Year	2009/10	2010/11
PhD Stipend, outside London	£13,290	£13,590
PhD Stipend, with London Allowance	£15,290	£15,590

80. Directly funded NERC CASE PhD students used to receive an additional allowance of £350 pa from NERC. All PhD students (except fees-only) used to receive an additional payment of £500 during their third year as a contribution to the cost of typing and binding their PhD thesis. These funds have now been incorporated into the DTG under the enlarged RTSG and organisations have greater flexibility to use the funds as required to support the studentship. CASE studentships should still receive at least £1,000pa for the first three years from the CASE Partner (on top of their standard maintenance payment), but any further CASE allowance from the DTG is optional.
81. Any students funded from the DTG have to meet the eligibility requirements as detailed in Section B. For a fees only student, all the studentship fees must be funded from the NERC DTG. The DTG funding can be used flexibly and could be used to provide an enhanced stipend in an area of recruitment and retention difficulty.
82. To qualify for London Allowance students must be studying within the Metropolitan Police District or be based at Imperial College, Silwood Park or Brunel for a minimum continuous period of 12 months. The level of maintenance award in the DTG is based on the location of the Research Organisation holding the DTG. The DTG will not be supplemented with extra funding to cover London allowance, but DTG funding can be used, where required, to cover extra costs (for example, where a student spends time at a CASE Partner in London).

University Fees

83. NERC provides funding for university fees in the DTG. NERC and the other Research Councils set a fixed rate for fees every year (£3,390 in 2009/2010 and £3,466 in 2010/11), which is published at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/rcdu/postgradtrain.htm>. From April 2010, NERC will no longer add extra funds to DTGs to pay Oxbridge college fees. Organisations can take higher university fees or college fees from the DTG, if required, but they should not charge the student for these extra fees.

Research Training Support Grant

84. The DTG includes a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) component. This is a contribution towards costs incurred in training research students e.g. the provision of consumables, equipment, travel, etc. The RTSG is not intended to relieve a Research Organisation of any part of its normal expenditure. Funding towards fieldwork expenses and “exceptional consumables” are now incorporated into the DTG.
85. The DTG can be used to fund conference, workshop and short course attendance. NERC expects that within the period of the award each student should have the opportunity to attend at least one conference at which they can present the findings of their research. A small number of short courses are also funded directly by NERC (see: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/studentinfo/scsupport.asp>). The student should apply directly to the course organiser if they are interested in attending any of those courses.

Project Studentships

86. A project studentship provides funding for up to 42 months for a research student to carry out a well-defined programme of work within the research grant, leading to the award of a PhD/DPhil. The project studentship includes the student's maintenance grant, and university fees. These should be requested on the application form as an Exceptions cost. These will be paid at 100% fEC. Additional costs may be requested on the research grant application form for items such as conference travel, fieldwork expenses and consumables. These should be requested as a Directly Incurred cost and will be paid at 80% fEC. A project student could be funded subsequently from a Doctoral Training Grant, for example, where the student was a replacement and there was insufficient funds left on the research grant.

Doctoral Training Grants (DTGs)

87. Doctoral Training Grants (DTGs) include all the funding for PhD training (except Disabled Students Allowance and Roberts Skills Funding – see section C). DTGs may contain funding for a single studentship project awarded through a competition (either Open CASE or a directed programme) or for single/multiple studentship(s) awarded through the studentship algorithm (NERC Quota allocation).
88. There does not need to be 1:1 relationship between a student and a DTG. Students can be funded from more than one DTG as long as at least 50% of the total funding comes from NERC. Where research organisations receive overlapping NERC DTGs they can use the funds flexibly to ensure maximum benefit to the NERC funded students.
89. At least 50% of the total cost of the studentship should be drawn from the NERC DTG, but the remaining funding could be drawn from other sources. You could provide 50:50 funding from two different Research Council DTGs (EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC or STFC – not AHRC or ESRC currently) in order to support an interdisciplinary area.
90. PhD studentships should be funded for between three and four years (FTE). DTG's will be based on 3.5 years funding, but will last four years. The funding will be front-loaded on the basis that most of the expenditure will occur in the first 3.5 years. The four year grant end date allows for situations where a student starts late or where the studentship is extended for reasons such as sickness or maternity.
91. The Terms and Conditions for all NERC DTGs are in section G. NERC has adopted the same DTG Terms and Conditions as EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and STFC studentships.
92. Extra costs for maternity/adoptive/sick leave (see section C) should be taken from the DTG, where possible, or requested as part of the grant reconciliation process. Due to the nature of some NERC DTGs which have funding for a single studentship, NERC may exceptionally agree to an extension of the end date and supplementation of the DTG for the purposes of maternity/adoptive/sick leave. Where departments are in receipt of larger and successive DTGs, funding should be found from within the DTGs.
93. DTGs will be made up of the basic costs below, but the funding will be indexed to allow for enough funds to cover yearly increases in the maintenance grant and fees. The indexation rate over the four years of the DTG will be informed by the Treasury GDP Deflators that are published in the April preceding the DTG start date. The forecast GDP Deflators may be different from the final rate on which the cross-council maintenance grant and fees levels are based each year (see para 79 and 83), but DTG funding can be used flexibly to manage this situation.
94. NERC DTGs will be made up in one of two ways depending on whether they have been awarded via a competition or via the studentship algorithm.

DTGs Funding Algorithm Studentships

95. The NERC algorithm will be used to determine the number of notional studentships. For each notional

studentship, the following funds will be included in the DTG:

- A maintenance award (£13,590 in 2010/2011) multiplied by 3.5 years
- London allowance, where applicable (£2,000) multiplied by 3.5 years
- University fees (£3,466 in 2010/2011) multiplied by 3.5 years
- An enlarged Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) to cover all other costs.

96. The enlarged RTSG is based on the following costs, but the RTSG can be used flexibly and not strictly based on these costs:

Previous funding arrangement (directly funded students)	Total funding in DTG – making up enlarged RTSG
RTSG - £1000pa over 3.5 years	£3,500
UK and overseas fieldwork and exceptional consumables (average amount paid per studentship in 2007/2008 was £4,770, with 2.8% inflation = £4,900)	£4,900
Conference allowance - £150pa over 3 years	£450
Third year funding - £500 in third year	£500
CASE Allowance - £350pa over 3 years, with 30% of students with CASE awards	£350
Total RTSG contribution per notional studentship	£9700

DTG Funding Competition Based Studentship(s)

97. Where a studentship proposal is submitted for the Open CASE competition or a Directed Programme competition, the extra costs associated with the project will be requested in the proposal and agreed by the Review Panel. If successful the funding will then be provided in the form of a DTG and would include the following funds:

- A maintenance award (£13,590 in 2010/2011) multiplied by 3.5 years
- London allowance, where applicable (£2,000) multiplied by 3.5 years
- University fees (£3,466 in 2010/2011) multiplied by 3.5 years
- A variable RTSG payment made up of the following:

Component	Total funding in DTG
RTSG - £1000pa over 3.5 years	£3,500
Third year funding - £500 in third year	£500
Conference allowance - £150pa over 3 years	£450
CASE Allowance - £350pa over 3 years.	£1050
UK fieldwork, overseas fieldwork, exceptional consumables, as requested on the proposal and agreed by the review panel	Variable.
Total RTSG contribution per notional studentship	At least £5,500

Termination of Studentships

98. If a DTG-funded student terminates, the termination date and reason should be submitted to NERC via the Je-S SDP. NERC will not supplement DTGs, but the remaining DTG funds could be used to fund/part-fund another student. If the remaining funds can't be used to fund a subsequent studentship (for example, where insufficient funds can be found from a subsequent DTG or other source to fund any short-fall), NERC should be informed and will terminate the DTG.

Payments

99. The DTG will be paid quarterly, in advance. The funding for each academic year is based on a fixed number of full awards. The funding will be indexed over the period of the grant. Grants are cash-limited from the outset and NERC will not accept any request for additional funding, except within the provisions of the Terms and Conditions, with respect to maternity/adoptive and sick leave.

Grant Announcement and Schedule of Payments

100. An announcement letter and payment schedule will be issued at least two months prior to the scheduled first payment of the grant. The Research Organisation must confirm acceptance and this notification will be taken as acceptance of the grant on the terms and conditions stated, and will activate profiled payments.

Final Expenditure Statement (FES)

101. NERC requires that a Final Expenditure Statement is received at the end of the award. Failure to submit such documentation may result in sanctions being imposed on the institution, including cessation of any further studentship support. In cases where payments still need to be made after the end date of the DTG, for example, because of sickness, maternity or part-time working; the grant end date will need to be extended to cover any required payments. Once an expenditure statement has been received and the expenditure incurred has been reconciled against payments made, it will be considered as final. Costs arising from maternity leave or sick leave should be identified in the exceptional items heading of the statement.
102. NERC reserves the right to require the Research Organisation to complete and submit a statement of expenditure at any time during the course of the DTG, or to provide supplementary information in support of an interim or final expenditure statement.

Financial Propriety

103. NERC reserves the right to examine, in detail, all terms of expenditure charged to an award, and in addition will visit selected institutions as part of the cross-Council Funding Assurance Programme (FAP).

Section E – FINANCIAL CONDITIONS - Masters Studentships

104. Masters studentships may only be held by eligible students attending MSc and MRes courses listed in the NERC Display Notice at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/awards/masters/2009.asp>. The last full review of masters courses took place in 2005, with an interim review taking place in 2008. Details can be found at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/studentinfo/mastersreview2005.asp> and <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/studentinfo/mastersreview.asp>. Future allocations will be made for a three-year period.
105. Students must apply directly to the Research Organisation running the course; **NERC does not accept applications directly from students.**
106. NERC now provide its masters support via Masters Training Grants (MTG). Each MTG will provide funding for a fixed number of full awards. A full award will be based on:
- Maintenance award/stipend
 - Fees
 - RTSG/fieldwork contribution
 - London Allowance (LA), where applicable
107. The MTG must support at least the number of studentships announced on the Display Notice and which forms the basis for the MTG. NERC students must receive at least 50% of the “full” stipend and 50% of the fixed fees level from the MTG. The minimum requirement would be for a MTG for three full awards to support three studentships (at 50% or above), with the extra funding being used towards associated studentship costs. Research Organisations no longer need to nominate students and can now continue to offer studentships up until the start of the course (and beyond where funding is still available, for example, following a termination).
108. Awards are made to the main Research Organisation in which the course is based. The course organiser will be named as the Principal Applicant, but can not transfer the MTG to any other Research Organisation. NERC should be notified of any change in the course organiser/principal applicant.
109. The MTG must not be used to support other masters courses. NERC should be notified immediately if the named course is to be closed. Whilst Research Organisations are encouraged to use the flexibility afforded within the MTG, NERC reserves the right to re-profile the account if it considers that payments to the Research Organisation are significantly at variance with expenditure.

Maintenance Award

110. The MTG will include a fixed number of stipend payments. The full masters stipend for 2010/11 is £8,712 and for 2009/10 was £8,500. The MTG for courses based in London includes a fixed payment of £2000 per studentship for London Allowance (LA). NERC students must receive at least 50% of the full stipend level (to include LA where applicable), so in 2010/11, they should receive at least £4,356 (£5,356 with LA). The fees and stipend level per studentship does not have to be equal, as long as they are both at least 50%.

University Fees

111. The MTG will include a fixed number of fees payments. The level of the fees payments is set each year on a cross-Research Council basis. For the 2009/10 academic year the fees payment is £3,466 in 2010/11 and was £3,390 in 2009/10 (see: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/rcdu/postgradtrain.htm>.) NERC supported students must have a minimum of 50% of this set fees level paid from the MTG. Where a student receives less than 100% of the fixed fees level from the MTG, they would be expected to make the fees up to the 100% level. The fees and stipend level per studentship does not have to be equal, as long as they are both at least 50%.
112. NERC students must not be charged extra fees in excess of the Research Council set level. Extra fees could be taken directly from the MTG, as necessary. For example, a student could be offered 90% of the full stipend level and the other 10% be used to “top up” the fixed fees level. The RTSG/Fieldwork component of the MTG might also be used to top up the fixed fees level, especially where an element of the fees is to cover fieldwork and direct studentship costs.
113. For courses based at Oxford or Cambridge University, the MTG’s announced in 2006 and 2009 included a fixed payment per studentship (£2,000 pa) as a contribution towards college fees. From April 2010, NERC

will no longer add extra funds to MTGs to pay Oxbridge college fees. Organisations can take higher university fees or college fees from the MTG, if required, but they should not charge the student for these extra fees.

Research Training Support Grant

114. Studentships are not currently subject to Full Economic Cost (FEC) rules (as with research grants) and HEIs receive other funding towards some of the teaching and other costs of masters course provision. This extra funding is a contribution towards some of the costs directly associated with the studentship. The MTG is not expected to cover university estates, infrastructure or other indirect costs (beyond that included within the tuition fees).
115. Courses have been awarded one of five levels of RTSG/Fieldwork contribution (Band A: £250, Band B: £500, Band C: £1,000, Band D: £1,500, Band E: £2,000), based on:
- Information on fieldwork and project costs submitted in the masters review application, in particular, in section 17.
 - Previous claims (for courses supported between 2001-2005)
 - Comparable bands for similar types of courses.
116. The funding is primarily a contribution towards fieldwork costs for the studentships, but the funding can also be used for specific studentship related costs, such as consumables. NERC supported students should benefit in the same way as they would have done when they could claim back costs directly from NERC. Departments can use this funding flexibly, to the benefit of the NERC supported students.

Part-funded students

117. Previously NERC would fund studentships at either 50 or 100%. This new MTG mechanism allows the funding to be used flexibly as required. NERC students must receive at least 50% of the funding from the MTG (50% of their stipend and fees). However, there is now more flexibility and the MTG could support, for example, a fees only student and another studentship at around 70% funding.

Fees only Students

118. The same eligibility rules apply to these studentships as previously (see Section B). Where an EU student who is eligible for a fees-only award is offered a NERC studentship, the fees component can be funded from the MTG, (as well as some RTSG/fieldwork costs). The stipend should not be funded from the MTG.

Start date and duration of Studentships

119. NERC would normally expect the studentship to start in September or October and continue for 12 months. Where a studentship is extended, through sickness, maternity or part-time working, into the period after the end date of the MTG, an extension to the grant should be requested, unless funding is available from a subsequent MTG.

Part-time Students

120. Where appropriate, the MTG could be used to support a studentship on a part-time basis (at least 50% of full-time).

Replacements

121. Where a student terminates their award before completing the course, or where they complete the course early, NERC will expect any major overpayments to be refunded to the University. Any remaining funding could then either be used to support another eligible student in the same year, or be retained and used to support a student in the next academic year, as long as that is within the period of the MTG.

Sick Leave

122. NERC would expect the majority of cases of sickness to be for a relatively short duration and that the student will still complete their masters course within the period of agreed support (normally 12 months). Where the student was ill for a significant period during the award, resulting in the studentship being extended beyond the initial agreed period, NERC would fund the extra costs to the MTG. Extra funding of **up to** 13 weeks of sick pay (based on the percentage of the full stipend that the individual is receiving) would be funded as part of the reconciliation process for the grant. NERC reserves the right to check medical certificates have been received to cover any extra costs being recovered on a MTG.

Maternity and Adoptive Leave

123. NERC will fund **up to** 26 weeks paid maternity/adoptive leave for students (based on the percentage of the full stipend that the individual is receiving), where necessary, during the reconciliation process for the grant.

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

124. Any NERC-supported masters students can still apply directly to NERC for DSA. See section C for more details. DSA payments are currently paid separately to the MTG. DSA payments may in future be added to the MTG.

Studentship Data

125. Information on all NERC-funded students must be provided by the University when requested via the Je-S Studentship Details Portal (SDP). Studentship data should be entered within one month of the student start date. The system should be updated as necessary during the year, for example, where students terminate and are replaced. The University will also need to provide submission data through this system. Further information on how to submit student details can be found via the NERC website at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/student.asp>.

Payments

126. The MTG will be paid quarterly, in advance. The funding for each academic year is based on a fixed number of full awards. The funding will be indexed over the period of the grant. Grants are cash-limited from the outset and NERC will not accept any request for additional funding, except within the provisions of the Terms and Conditions, with respect to maternity/adoptive and sick leave.

Grant Announcement and Schedule of Payments

127. An announcement letter and payment schedule will be issued at least two months prior to the scheduled first payment of the grant. The Research Organisation must confirm acceptance and this notification will be taken as acceptance of the grant on the terms and conditions stated, and will activate profiled payments.

Final Expenditure Statement (FES)

128. NERC requires that a Final Expenditure Statement is received at the end of the award. Failure to submit such documentation may result in sanctions being imposed on the institution, including cessation of any further masters course support. In cases where payments still need to be made after the end date of the MTG, for example, because of sickness, maternity or part-time working; the grant end date will need to be extended to cover any required payments. Once an expenditure statement has been received and the expenditure incurred has been reconciled against payments made, it will be considered as final. Costs arising from maternity leave or sick leave should be identified in the exceptional items heading of the statement.
129. NERC reserves the right to require the Research Organisation to complete and submit a statement of expenditure at any time during the course of the MTG, or to provide supplementary information in support of an interim or final expenditure statement.

Financial Propriety

130. NERC reserves the right to examine, in detail, all terms of expenditure charged to an award, and in addition will visit selected institutions as part of the cross-Council Funding Assurance Programme (FAP).

Section F: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Communications

Researchers need to communicate their work to other scientists and researchers in the academic community. But NERC also expects you to communicate and engage with people in the wider community, such as journalists, schoolchildren, teachers, industry and policy-makers. You can take part in existing national schemes such as Researchers in Residence or become a Science and Engineering Ambassador. For local activities during National Science Week grants up to £2000 are available. Alternatively grant-holders can develop their own ideas outside of these schemes.

For advice you can contact the NERC communications team, based at Swindon Office, which provides professional, external communications services to staff throughout NERC, our research centres and to our scientists and students in universities. Your own research centre or university may well have people to help you with public engagement and science in society activities. From 2008, five or more dedicated public engagement centres will open in universities across the UK. These Beacon centres have the specific task of encouraging researchers to interact with the public.

Order our free guidance notes [Communicating Your Ideas](#)

For a list of schemes available to grant-holders and students see the [Research Councils UK](#) website.

Press and publicity

All grant holders and students must inform the NERC press office (pressoffice@nerc.ac.uk, Marion O'Sullivan on 01793 411727 or Tamera Jones on 01793 411561) at the same time you inform your institution's press office if they are planning to publicise your NERC-funded research, for example, a press release to coincide with the publication of a scientific paper. If you are not planning a press release with your institution, you should still inform both the press office and the communications team (editors@nerc.ac.uk) when you have a paper accepted for publication by a scientific journal. This gives the press office and the communications team time to plan for either a press release or a story on NERC's new website.

Scientists often have to deal with contentious issues. Dealing with journalists or a questioning public in these circumstances can be intimidating. The NERC communications team is trained to deal with these situations and can offer advice, guidance and support. Contact us immediately if you have any concerns about how to deal professionally with the media.

Publications

We edit, design and produce the award-winning free magazine *Planet Earth*. Order your free copy [here](#). See the NERC website for other publications that you might wish to use when you are talking with the public. Most of the features in the magazine are written by NERC-funded scientists. If you are interested in telling a wider audience about your work and gaining experience of science communication, contact editors@nerc.ac.uk about the possibility of writing a feature; we will provide advice and editorial assistance to help you get your message across.

We also run a news website, Planet Earth online, for which we write daily news about NERC-funded science. We are always interested in hearing about new NERC-funded science that we could cover on the site. We also run podcasts and blogs; if you are involved in an interesting project that you think would lend itself to being covered in this way, please let us know.

Communications courses

Brush up your communications skills and find out how national science correspondents put their stories together. We run FREE communications courses for our students, grant-holders and staff and we have produced a booklet and online guide to successful science communication whether in print, broadcast, at events or even lectures.

NERC runs six of these a year at its offices in Swindon. You will learn, through hands-on sessions run by top journalists, how:

- the media works
- to write about your research so that it will appeal to a lay audience
- to get your science understood in radio interviews
- to engage with the public

Guest speakers: you will have the opportunity to meet a science journalist working for one of the UK's leading

newspapers/media companies. Additionally an ex-BBC radio journalist will help you hone your radio interview skills.

How to apply

Your research must be funded by NERC in order to be eligible for this course. Due to the popularity of this course, we recommend that you contact us to express an interest at the earliest possible instance. If there are no spaces available, we can put you on a waiting list.

Please email: requests@nerc.ac.uk

Exploitation and Intellectual Property

Details can be found on the NERC website at:

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/using/business/commercial/intellectualproperty.asp>

NERC Scientific Services and Facilities

Details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/sites/facilities/list.asp>

NERC Designated Data Centres

Details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/sites/data/>

Data Availability

It is NERC policy to increase the visibility and awareness of environmental data and to improve their management as an overall resource. Award-holders should therefore make sure that NERC Designated Data Centres (Additional Information section) are aware of significant datasets generated, or to be compiled, under the award so that their long-term stewardship can be assured or planned.

NERC Mission

Details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/about/work/mission.asp>

NERC Science Areas

Details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/areas/>

NERC Complaints Procedure

Details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/site/feedback/complaints.asp>

Statement of Council Policy on Vested Interests

Details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/about/work/policy/vestedinterests.asp>

Overseas Fieldwork Bands

Details can be found on the NERC website at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/studentships/>

Section G: TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF RESEARCH COUNCIL TRAINING GRANTS

These terms and conditions relate to training grants, comprising doctoral training grants (DTGs) and masters training grants (MTGs).

Training Grants awarded by the Research Councils listed below are made to Research Organisations on the basis of this single set of core terms and conditions. The Research Councils are:

Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
Medical Research Council (MRC)
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)

A Training Grant (TG) is a grant paid by a Research Council to a Research Organisation for the provision of postgraduate study.

Training Grants aim to:

- assist the Research Organisation to attract the best people into postgraduate research and training;
- allow a maximum of local discretion in managing and organising postgraduate training within clear financial and accountability arrangements;
- Provide resources in a flexible and transparent funding stream.

Subject to these terms and conditions, Research Organisations can decide on the level of stipend; the duration of a studentship; the format (e.g. part-time, industrial or work placement), and can adjust the number and start of awards within year and between years (where feasible).

Individual Councils may add additional conditions to the grant to reflect the particular circumstances and requirements of their organisation, or the nature of a particular grant. Acceptance of a Training Grant constitutes acceptance of both the core conditions and any additional conditions.

References in these terms and conditions to statutory provisions and guidance include any subsequent amendments or re-enactments.

The Research Council reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions, and where appropriate will consult the Research Organisation before major changes are introduced.

Definitions

Funding Assurance Programme (FAP): A programme of visits and office-based tests to seek assurance that grant funds are used for the purpose for which they are given and that grants are managed in accordance with the terms and conditions under which they are awarded.

Training Account (TA): A Training Account is made up of the overlapping Training Grants to a Research Organisation.

Doctoral Training Grant (DTG): a grant providing funds for the training of research students leading to the award of a recognised qualification, usually a PhD.

Masters Training Grants (MTG): a grant providing funds for the training of postgraduate students leading to the award of a recognised qualification, usually a Masters.

TA Coordinator: the principal contact at a Research Organisation for the Training Grant. The role includes responsibility for ensuring the provision of data on the students funded through the Training Grants.

Departmental Account Manager: Where the TA supports postgraduate training across the whole Research Organisation, the Research Organisation may wish to identify individuals who act as the main contact point within particular departments for funded students.

Fees: The funds required by a University for a Student to register for a higher degree.

Je-S Studentship Details Portal (SDP): the Research Councils' web-based data collection system which Research Organisations use to return details of the students and student research projects funded from the Training Grant.

Research Council: any of the bodies listed above.

Research Organisation: The organisation to which the TG is awarded and which takes responsibility for the management of the research training programme and the accountability of funds provided.

Stipend: The funds awarded by the Research Organisation to students to cover their maintenance while undertaking postgraduate training leading to the award of a postgraduate degree.

Students: The term used to identify postgraduates who are funded through the Training Grant.

Studentship: The term used for the funding award made by a research organisation to a student for the purpose of undertaking postgraduate training leading to the award of a postgraduate degree.

Data Protection Regulations

The Research Councils will use information provided on the Training Grant proposal for processing the proposal or in relation to the administration of the Training Grant for the award of any subsequent grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the grant. This includes data submitted through the SDP. This may include:

- Registration of proposals;
- Operation of grants processing and management information systems;
- Preparation of material for use by referees and peer review panels;
- Administration, investigation and review of grant proposals;
- Sharing proposal information on a strictly confidential basis with other funding organisations to seek contributions to the funding of proposals
- Statistical analysis in relation to the evaluation of postgraduate training and the study of trends;
- Policy and strategy studies.

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of student projects funded from Training Grants may also be made available on the Research Council's web site and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations

Attention is drawn to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs). Research Councils have issued Publication Schemes which set out the types of information publicly available on their websites or published as documents. In addition, Research Councils have an obligation to respond to specific requests and may be required to disclose information about or provided by Research Organisations. In some cases the Research Council may consult the Research Organisation before disclosure, but it is under no obligation to do so. If a Research Organisation considers that any information it provides to a Research Council would be subject to an exemption under FOIA or the EIRs it should clearly mark the information as such and provide an explanation of why it considers the exemption applies and for how long. The Research Council will consider this explanation before disclosure, but it is not obliged to accept it as binding.

Where a Research Council determines that a Research Organisation is holding information on its behalf that it requires in order to comply with its obligations under FOIA or EIRs, the Research Organisation undertakes to provide access to such information as soon as reasonably practicable on request of the Research Council and in any event within 5 working days.

In some cases Research Organisations may be directly responsible for complying with FOIA and the EIRs; in such cases the Research Councils accept no responsibility for any failure to comply by the Research Organisations.

TGC 1 Responsibilities of the Research Organisation

The Research Organisation is responsible for selecting, administering and supervising students throughout their period of training, in accordance with current good practice as detailed in the *QAA's Code of Practice for Postgraduate*

Research Programmes (2004), and in accordance with any additional Research Council requirements.

In particular, the Research Organisation must ensure that:

- Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of students
- Adequate facilities and resources are made available for the research training;
- A safe working environment is provided, meeting the requirements of health and safety legislation, and any other legislation concerning the health, welfare and rights of students, including the Data Protection Act;
- Projects lie within the remit of the Research Council funding the TG.
- Research Training Programmes contain good training in generic and transferable skills

The Research Organisation must ensure that the research supported by the grant complies with all relevant legislation and Government regulation, including that introduced while work is in progress. This requirement includes approval or licence from any regulatory body that may be required before the research can commence. Where third parties, such as a regulatory body, become involved with investigating alleged breaches in legislation as a result of work funded by the Research Council, that RC must be informed immediately of the circumstances.

The Research Organisation must ensure proper financial management of TGs and accountability for the use of public funds. Research Organisations are expected to take reasonable steps to recover monies paid to students in advance who leave or whose studentship is terminated.

TGC 2 Research Governance

It is the responsibility of the Research Organisation to ensure that the research is organised and undertaken within a framework of best practice that recognises the various factors that may influence or impact on a student's research project. Particular requirements are to ensure that all necessary permissions are obtained before the project begins, and that there is clarity of role and responsibility among the research team (including the student) and with any collaborators. The Research Councils expect research to be conducted in accordance with the highest standards of research integrity and research methodology.

Research Ethics

The Research Organisation is responsible for ensuring that ethical issues relating to a student's research project funded from the TG are identified and brought to the attention of the relevant approval or regulatory body. Approval to undertake the research must be granted before any work requiring approval begins. Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass, among other things, relevant codes of practice, the involvement of human participants, tissue or data in research, the use of animals, research that may result in damage to the environment and the use of sensitive economic, social or personal data.

Use of Animals in Research

Wherever possible, researchers must adopt procedures and techniques that avoid the use of animals. Where this is not possible, the research should be designed so that:

- The least sentient species with the appropriate physiology is used;
- The number of animals used is the minimum sufficient to provide adequate statistical power to answer the question posed;
- The severity of procedures performed on animals is kept to a minimum. Experiments should be kept as short as possible. Appropriate anaesthesia, analgesia and humane end points should be used to minimise any pain and suffering.

The provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and any amendments, must be observed and all necessary licences must have been received before any work requiring approval takes place. Please note the requirements in TGC 1 regarding any alleged breaches in legislation.

Medical and Health Research

The Research Organisation is responsible for managing and monitoring the conduct of medical and health research in a manner consistent with the Department of Health's Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care.

There must be effective and verifiable systems in place for managing research quality, progress and the safety and well-being of patients and other research participants. These systems must promote and maintain the relevant codes of practice and all relevant statutory review, authorisation and reporting requirements.

Health-related research within the social sciences that falls outside the Department of Health's Research Governance Framework must meet the provisions and guidelines of ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics. While this research may involve patients, NHS staff or organisations, it is defined as research that poses no clinical risk or harm to those who are the subjects of research. Research Organisations must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for independent ethics review of social science research that meets local research ethics committee standards.

Significant developments must be assessed as the research proceeds, especially those that affect safety and well-being, which should be reported to the appropriate authorities and to the Research Council. The Research Organisation must take appropriate and timely action when significant problems are identified. This may include temporarily suspending or terminating the research.

The Research Organisation is responsible for managing and monitoring statutory requirements for which it accepts responsibility, for example, in relation to legislation on clinical trials, use of human organs, tissues and data.

Guidance by the MRC on the conduct of medical research, and by ESRC on the conduct of social science research, provided on behalf of all Research Councils, must be observed.

Health and Safety

The Research Organisation is responsible for ensuring that a safe working environment is provided for all individuals associated with a student's research project. Its approach and policy on health and safety matters must meet all regulatory and legislative requirements and be consistent with best practice recommended by the Health & Safety Executive.

Appropriate care must be taken where a student is working off-site. The Research Organisation must satisfy itself that all reasonable health and safety factors are addressed.

The Research Councils reserve the right to require the Research Organisation to undertake a safety risk assessment in individual cases where health and safety is an issue, and to monitor and audit the actual arrangements made.

Misconduct and Conflicts of Interest

The Research Organisation is required to have in place procedures for governing good research practice that meet the requirements of the Research Council's guidance on good practice. The Research Organisation must ensure that there are reliable systems and processes in place for the prevention of misconduct e.g. plagiarism, falsification of data, together with well-defined and clearly-publicised arrangements for investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct.

Where an allegation of misconduct arises in respect of a student supported by a Training Grant, the Research Council must be informed immediately and notified of the outcome of any investigation.

The Research Organisation must ensure that potential conflicts of interest in research are declared and subsequently managed.

TGC 3 Use of Funds

Subject to the following conditions, TG funds may be used, without reference to the Research Council, in such a manner as to best undertake the provision of training leading to the award of a postgraduate degree which must fall within the remit of the Council concerned.

Grant funds include a provision for inflation based on the GDP Deflators published by HM Government. The value of the grant may be varied by the Research Council during the lifetime of the grant in accordance with the deflators or to take into account any other Government decisions affecting the funding available to the Research Councils.

Grant funds cannot be used to meet the costs of any item where the activity falls outside the period of the grant, e.g. when travel falls outside the grant period, the costs cannot be charged to the grant even if the tickets, etc. can be purchased in advance

Other costs, for example those associated with the administration of the training, advertising costs and the costs of open days, may be incorporated into the fee level that the Research Organisation charges to the Training Grant as long as the same level of fee is used for UK/EU non-Research Council funded students on similar programmes. Such costs may not be taken from the training grant other than through the fee level; nor may individual RC students be charged additional fees above the level paid by the research council.

Student Eligibility

The use of funding to provide full awards or fees-only awards should be in accordance with student eligibility as determined by the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1997 and subsequent amendments. An equivalent set of Regulations exists for Scotland.

Student Training

Funds may be used for student stipends, fees, project costs and the incidental costs of research training, such as travel and conference attendance.

Students may be full or part-time. The Research Organisation may decide on the period of support for individuals (up to 4 years full time support). Part time awards should not normally be less than 50% of full time. Where the period of support for a student extends beyond the end date of a grant, the balance of support can be provided by the next or subsequent grant or from another source.

For any studentship where funding is drawn from a TA, either:

a) for a fees-only student, all the student's fees must be funded from the TA of a single Council;

or

b) where a student is eligible for a full award, at least 50% of the total cost of the studentship must be drawn from the TA of a single Council. The remaining costs may be funded from other sources, such as the research organisation's funds or from research partners. (Joint Research Council funding of multidisciplinary awards is possible on the basis of 50:50 funding from two Councils' TAs; in that case one of the Councils must be designated as the majority funder for monitoring and information purposes.)

Where a student is eligible for a stipend, the stipend awarded must be at least equal to the Research Councils' minimum rates for the relevant academic year. The Research Organisation may, if it wishes, pay a higher level of stipend, provided that it does not overspend the value of the grant.

The allocation of funds for the incidental costs of postgraduate training should have regard for the nature and complexity of projects and the need for fieldwork, conferences, broadening training and industrial or work placements.

Extensions, Suspensions and Terminations of Studentships

The Research Organisation must make suitable arrangements for coping with absences of students for illness, maternity leave, paternity leave, adoptive leave, extended jury service and holidays. All Research Council funded students are entitled to take 6 months of maternity leave on full stipend and a further 6 months of unpaid maternity leave. The Research Organisation must ensure that it is aware of unauthorised absences by students, so that future payments may be stopped and those already made in advance of need can be recovered. The period of a student's support may be extended at the Research Organisation's discretion to offset a period of genuine absence, subject to finding the necessary funding from within the Research Organisation's Training Account. Where there are insufficient funds in the Training Account to meet the costs of maternity leave, the Research Council will consider compensation at the end of the grant to cover the additional costs arising from maternity leave providing the RO can demonstrate that it lacks the flexibility to meet the costs of maternity support and that it has no other contingency funding of concurrent Training Grants on which it could draw.

Student Transfers

The grant will not be amended to take account of the transfer of a student from one Research Organisation to another, or from one department to another within the Research Organisation. Transfers may be arranged where they are essential to the student's training e.g. when a supervisor is moving, and should be by agreement between the Research Organisations concerned. Research Council expects that the arrangements for such a

transfer would include the relevant funds. The SDP should be updated following a student transfer.

Disabled Students Allowances

Students funded from a TG are eligible for additional support where, because of disability, they are obliged to incur additional expenditure in undertaking their training. Application and payment arrangements will be as specified by the Research Council.

Where a student is funded from two Councils' TAs, the application will be considered by the Council which is acting as the majority funder (see above).

TGC 4 Grant Arrangements and Starting Procedures

Grants are for a specified number of years, adopting fixed start and end dates. The Research Organisation must complete and return an acceptance and/or a starting certificate; these notifications will be taken as acceptance of the grant on the terms and conditions stated, and will activate profiled payments.

Submission of the starting certificate is required within one month of a student starting. Payment arrangements will be as specified by the Research Council.

TGC 5 Annual Statement

The Research Organisation may be sent a statement to return each year showing payments made by the Research Council during the previous financial year for all the grants it holds. Where a statement is required, the Research Organisation must certify, by returning the statement, that:

- expenditure has been incurred in accordance with the grant conditions, and
- those grants shown as current are continuing.

No further payments will be made until the annual statement has been received and accepted by the Research Council.

TGC 6 Expenditure Statements

At the end of the grant, the Research Organisation must complete and return a final expenditure statement (FES) detailing expenditure incurred over the full period of the grant. The FES must be received within three months of the end date of the grant. Once an FES has been received by the Research Council, and expenditure incurred has been reconciled against payments made, the statement will be considered as final. Facsimile or photocopies of the FES will not be accepted.

The Research Council reserves the right to require the Research Organisation to complete and submit a statement of expenditure at any time during the course of a grant, or to provide supplementary information in support of an interim or final expenditure statement.

TGC 7 Inspection

The Research Council reserves the right to have reasonable access to inspect the records and financial procedures associated with Training Grants or to appoint any other body or individual for the purpose of such inspection.

The Research Organisation must, if required by the Research Council, provide a statement of account for the grant, independently examined by an auditor who is a member of a recognised professional body, certifying that the expenditure has been incurred in accordance with the Training Grant terms and conditions.

Research Councils will undertake periodic reviews of Research Organisations within the **Funding Assurance Programme (FAP) programme** to seek assurance that Training Grants are managed in accordance with the terms and conditions under which they are awarded.

TGC 8 Sanctions

If the Final Expenditure Statement is not received within the period allowed, the Research Council may recover 20% of the expenditure incurred on the grant. All payments may be recovered if the statement is not received within 6 months of the end of the grant.

TGC 9 Public Engagement

It is the responsibility of the Research Organisation and the Supervisors to actively communicate the research to the public at both local and national level, and to raise awareness of the role of science and research in any related issues of public interest. Special schemes exist in some Research Councils providing additional support for these activities, or earmarked funding may be provided in the grant for this purpose.

TGC 10 Monitoring and Information Requirements

The Research Organisation will be required to provide the Research Council with standard information on students and their training programmes through the Je-S Studentship Details Portal (SDP) for inclusion in the Research Council's management information system.

Where a student is funded from two Councils' TAs, the information should be returned to the Council which is acting as the majority funder (see above), and not returned to the other council. Details of the secondary Research Council funder would be included in the submitted data.

Information should be entered within one month of the student starting their studies. Failure to provide this information may result in sanctions being imposed on future payments.

The Research Organisation should inform the Research Council of any significant changes to the student's research project funded from the TG, including change of supervisor or project objectives, by updating the SDP.

The Research Council expects that the start and end dates for the funded period of study will be agreed at the outset and would not be amended during the doctoral project unless exceptional circumstances apply. The Research Council will monitor any amendments to the start and end dates and reserves the option to apply original dates for assessing when thesis submission is due.

The Research Council should be notified through the Je-S SDP of students whose awards have been terminated, extended or transferred within a month of the change being formally agreed by the Research Organisation.

Research Organisations are also required to return information on the date of submission of the student's thesis.

The Research Organisation must make a clear statement, in relation to the Data Protection Act 1998, that personal information on students is being collected on behalf of the Research Council.

TGC 11 Commercial Exploitation

It is the responsibility of the Research Organisation, and all engaged in the research, to make every reasonable effort to ensure that the outcomes obtained in the course of the research, whether patentable or not, are used to the advantage of society and the economy. Research outcomes should be disseminated to both research and more widespread audiences - for example to inform potential users and beneficiaries of the research.

Responsibility for the arrangements relating to the ownership and management of intellectual property rests with the Research Organisation. The Research Organisation will be expected to put in place an agreement regarding the relative contributions to the creation of intellectual property and any associated revenue sharing arrangements before commercialisation or exploitation commences.

Arrangements for collaboration and/or exploitation must not prevent the future progression of research and the dissemination of research results in accordance with academic custom and practice. A temporary delay in publication is acceptable in order to allow commercial and collaborative arrangements to be established.

TGC 12 Publication and Acknowledgement of Support

Publications and other forms of media communication, including media appearances, press releases and conferences, must acknowledge the support received from the Research Council(s).

TGC 13 Disclaimer

The Research Council accepts no liability, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or liability arising from the research funded by the grant, except as set out in these terms and conditions, or otherwise agreed in writing.

Where studies are carried out in an NHS Trust, the Trust has a duty of care to its patients. The Research Council does not accept liability for any failure in the Trust's duty of care, or any negligence on the part of its employees.

The Research Councils reserve the right to terminate the grant at any time, subject to reasonable notice and to any payment that may be necessary to cover outstanding and unavoidable commitments.

Further to TGC3, the Research Councils reserve the right to amend the payment profile at their discretion. The Research Organisation will be advised, in advance, of any such change. Changes to payment profiles may affect the overall value of the grant

TGC 14 Status

These terms and conditions will be governed by the laws of England and Wales; all matters relating to the terms and conditions will be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

If any provision of these terms and conditions is found by a court or other legitimate body to be illegal, invalid or unreasonable, it will not affect the remaining terms and conditions which will continue in force.

These terms and conditions, together with any additional conditions set out in the grant, contain the whole agreement between the Research Council and the Research Organisation in relation to the stated grant. The Research Council and the Research Organisation do not intend that any of these terms and conditions should be enforceable by any third party.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO ACCOMPANY TERMS & CONDITIONS

Following discussions between the Research Information Network, Research Councils, other funders and journal publishers, a standard format has been agreed for acknowledging funders in journal articles. This is to enable improved tracking of the publications generated by funded research projects.

For articles published in journals, or deposited in institutional or subject-based repositories, the acknowledgement of funding should take the form of a sentence as in the following example, with the funding agency written out in full, followed by the grant number in square brackets:

This work was supported by the Medical Research Council [grant number xxxx].

Multiple grant numbers should be separated by comma and space. Where the research was supported by more than one agency, the different agencies should be separated by a semi-colon, with "and" before the final funder. For example:

This work was supported by the Wellcome Trust [grant numbers xxxx, yyyy]; the Natural Environment Research Council [grant number zzzz]; and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council [grant number aaaa].