

NERC 6th Training Advisory Group Meeting Summary 15th July 2014, University of Edinburgh.



This document is a summary of the agenda, discussions and outcomes of the above NERC TAG meeting.

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Minutes
2. Training Activities- general update
3. CASE review
4. Advanced Training Short Courses
5. DTP Update and Manager's meeting
6. International recruitment
7. AOB

Summary of Key Discussions and Outcomes:

1. *Welcome and Minutes* - N/A
2. *Training Activities* – NERC provided an overview of all current training activities to the TAG.

The TAG recommended:

- NERC prepare a “change request” document for the NERC DTPs/CDTs so that the TAG are made aware of any strategic management-level changes and deviations from the core activities reviewed within the DTP/CDT proposals.
 - NERC present alternative mechanisms for awarding Research Experience Placements and a review of the Environment YES competition for discussion at the December 2014 TAG meeting.
3. *CASE Review* – NERC presented the results of the 2014 CASE Studentships review to the TAG.

The TAG agreed that CASE is a successful scheme and should continue to be part of the NERC training portfolio. It was agreed that the mandatory levels for CASE partner contributions and current eligibility criteria for international CASE partners are appropriate. The TAG also discussed the possibility of introducing “priority partners” within the Industrial CASE competition but it was agreed that this is not a training priority at this time.

A number of items were raised to discuss at the finalisation of the CASE review at the December TAG meeting:

- A review of the eligibility and guidance for the Industrial CASE and other CASE competitions.
- A review of the requirement that 30% of DTP students be awarded as CASE.
- A discussion on the use of the funding provided through CASE partner contributions.
- A discussion of mechanisms for ensuring CASE students receive the full training experience expected from the NERC CASE scheme.

4. *Advanced Training Short Courses* – NERC invited the TAG to review the ATSC scheme.

The TAG agreed that this scheme is a valuable part of the NERC training portfolio and that the current budget is appropriate.

The TAG recommended:

- The assessment process be adjusted for future funding opportunities.
- Adjust the timings of the competition to match as close as possible the NERC financial year (Apr 1-Mar 31).
- To encourage engagement with non-academic partners for future short courses.

5. *DTP Update and Managers' Meeting*- NERC provided an update of the NERC DTPs to the TAG.

The E3 DTP provided a brief presentation to the TAG outlining their progress and developments to date.

NERC provided a summary of the events and outcomes arising from the first NERC DTP/CDT Managers' Meeting held in July 2014. The TAG discussed these outcomes and recommended:

- Not to enforce the unified acceptance date agreed at this meeting until it has been seen to be successful in practice.
- Not to hold a NERC Student conference at this time.
- To develop an information sharing forum for the NERC DTPs and CDTs available to those involved at all levels.

6. *International Recruitment* – the TAG was invited to discuss and recommend, if appropriate whether the conditions for international recruitment should be altered.

The TAG recommended that, due to a lack of strong evidence for change, the current policy should remain but that it should be reviewed in the future.

It was recognised that the Newton Fund should provide funding for PhD partnering with students not eligible for Research Council funding.

7. *AOB*

The TAG recommended:

- NERC remind award holders that DTP/CDT notional studentships cannot be “carried-over” between years and that all DTPs/CDTs must have a number of NERC student starts equal to their awarded number of notional studentships for each year of student starts.
- NERC provide a summary of the research areas of new DTP/iCASE students (2014/15) to ensure an appropriate spread of training is in place across the NERC science remit.
- NERC prepare a summary document of the key outcomes of TAG meetings moving forward to be made available to the NERC community.