



## Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT): Managing chemical risks in the environment

<b>Closing date</b>	Outline proposals – 6 May 2020 Full proposals – 5 August 2020
<b>Funding available</b>	Funding for eight studentships per annum will be awarded for three years of new student intake (i.e. 24 studentships in total). An expectation of the CDT is that NERC funding will be used to leverage additional investment (either cash or in-kind support) from multiple stakeholders.
<b>Funding mode/stream</b>	Postgraduate Training
<b>NERC Core or UKRI/Collective Fund budget</b>	NERC Core
<b>Project duration</b>	Six years
<b>Funding partners (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Start date requirements (if applicable)</b>	First cohort of studentships commence: October 2021
<b>Call aims and objectives</b>	<p>NERC supports Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) to provide directed investment into areas of priority to address training needs within the NERC remit.</p> <p>Proposals are sought to host a new CDT specialising in: Managing chemical risks in the environment.</p>
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	<p>This opportunity is open to organisations eligible for NERC research grant funding, i.e. applicants based at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), approved Research Council Institutes (RCIs) and approved Independent Research Organisations (IROs).</p> <p>Organisations that are not eligible for NERC research grant funding may act as Collaborative Partners and information regarding the nature of this collaboration must be included within the proposal.</p>
<b>Call specific requirements</b>	<p>NERC recognises the value of delivering studentships in partnership. NERC encourages proposals that demonstrate cross-disciplinary working, including across departmental boundaries within organisations, or between organisations. Partnerships with end-users (businesses, government departments and other civil society organisations) will be required in order to meet the objectives of the call.</p> <p>This call has a two-stage application process. Outline proposals must be submitted via email. Following an outline assessment panel, successful applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals must be submitted via the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission system (Je-S).</p>
<b>Contact</b>	Nancy Iteeyaporn, Andy Lloyd ( <a href="mailto:researchcareers@nerc.ukri.org">researchcareers@nerc.ukri.org</a> )



Natural  
Environment  
Research Council

## Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT): Managing chemical risks in the environment

### Announcement of Opportunity

Outline Proposals deadline: 16:00 - Wednesday 6 May 2020

Full Proposals deadline: 16:00 - Wednesday 5 August 2020

### 1. Summary

NERC supports Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) to provide directed investment into areas of priority to address training needs within the NERC remit.

Proposals are sought to host a new CDT specialising in: **Managing chemical risks in the environment.**

Funding for eight studentships per annum will be awarded for three years of new student intake (i.e. 24 studentships in total) from the start of the academic year 2021/22. An expectation of the CDT is that NERC funding will be used to leverage additional investment (either cash or in-kind support) from multiple stakeholders.

This opportunity is open to organisations eligible for NERC research grant funding, i.e. applicants based at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), approved Research Council Institutes (RCIs) and approved Independent Research Organisations (IROs).

NERC recognises the value of delivering studentships in partnership. NERC encourages proposals that demonstrate cross-disciplinary working, including across departmental boundaries within organisations, or between organisations. Partnerships with end-users (businesses, government departments and other civil society organisations) will be required in order to meet the objectives of the call. This call has a two-stage application process.

The closing date for outline proposals, to be submitted via email, is **16:00 on Wednesday 6 May 2020.**

Following an outline assessment panel, successful applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals must be submitted via the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission system (Je-S). The deadline for submission of full proposals is **16:00 Wednesday 5 August 2020.**

### 2. CDT priority area scope

Chemicals provide substantial benefits to society but their widespread use in industry, agriculture, food systems and homes has led in some cases to pollution of land, water, air and food. This is recognised in the Government's 25 year Environment Plan, and the

commitment to publish a new Chemicals Strategy to tackle chemicals of national concern that will build on existing approaches.<sup>1</sup>

Chemical use in the UK is growing and regulations are adopting precautionary approaches to identify the risks of hazardous chemicals in the environment. Traditional risk assessments, which incorporate exposure information, lack mechanistic insight, rely on in vivo exposure, and apply arbitrary assessment factors to assess chemical safety. Greater mechanistic insights and the application of a systems based approach would enable stakeholders to extrapolate from laboratory studies on single organisms to populations and/or communities in the field. In addition, such insights could help identify environmental hazards earlier in chemical development, predict potential impacts of chemical mixtures and assess interactions with other stressors on ecosystem function and ecosystem services.

The need for continued research in the area of ecotoxicology and the impacts of chemicals in the environment is high. This is particularly clear regarding issues such as neonicotinoid insecticides and pollinating insects, endocrine disrupters and fish populations, the safety assessment of novel substances such as nanomaterials and novel chemical formulations and how climate change, and infiltration of marine waters into freshwater aquifers, will affect the fate and effects of environmental chemicals.

Without the underpinning research to inform appropriate decisions and solutions to deal with these challenges, the cost to both the natural environment and the UK economy will be significant. The use of new approaches and modelling techniques to incorporate the broader ecosystem view and improve our understanding and certainty of the impacts of chemicals on the environment, provides an opportunity to improve how chemicals are assessed.

Targeted training through a NERC CDT will provide a focus for the coordinated interdisciplinary training of environmental science researchers necessary to meet the needs of the wide range of stakeholders relevant to chemical risk management. This supplements and underpins the recognition demonstrated by NERC's investment of £6m in a research programme on [Emerging Risks of Chemicals in the Environment](#), to improve understanding of how the environment and its functioning will respond to chemical mixture exposures in the context of multiple stressors. NERC also supports national capability in analytical chemistry, ecotoxicology, chemical risk and environmental contamination at the [UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology](#).

NERC and our community have identified that a particular challenge to progressing the research and innovation priorities is the need for new expertise in this area. There is a strong need for training of the next generation of ecotoxicologists skilled in experimental, modelling and statistical techniques, to strengthen capacity across research and industry.

Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of ensuring that industry, regulators and policy makers continue to have access to leading academic expertise and new talent to further the understanding of the role and impact of new and existing chemicals on natural ecosystems. In particular there is a requirement for individuals who are both trained with the necessary scientific capabilities but also have the skills and understanding to apply the principles and findings to the real-world challenges encountered by stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> HMG 2018 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

There is also acknowledgement of a growing need for interdisciplinary researchers with knowledge of techniques and approaches from across the relevant disciplines. Without this, there is a risk that the next generation of talent will not be developed with the necessary skills and the sector will lack the resources to identify and develop the solutions to the environmental risks of chemicals in the environment.

### 3. Training remit

Training provided by the CDT must be within the [NERC remit](#), and relevant to the [NERC Delivery Plan](#), but may include training at the interface between environmental sciences and other disciplines, where the solutions to many major research and innovation challenges exist. Training delivered by this CDT must align with the areas specifically outlined in this call but may build on existing training infrastructure where applicable, and engagement with other relevant Research Council CDTs/Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) and their end-user networks is strongly encouraged.

The CDT must offer postgraduate training in environmental chemistry, ecotoxicology, ecology, and risk assessment. While this should be the focus, the training programme is expected to incorporate training in other relevant disciplines, such as risks to human health, where appropriate, and make use of modelling developments that enable linkage of knowledge and data across disciplines. The programme must combine fundamental scientific training on the impact of anthropogenic activities on the environment with an understanding of the regulatory, policy and business drivers that ultimately determine societal and economic impact. In order to meet these objectives it will be essential for the CDT to engage in a meaningful way with a wide range of end-users of research across the sector, including industry, regulators, government departments, NGOs, consultancies and contract research organisations. Proposals must outline a coherent training programme that includes all of the following research areas:

- Environmental chemistry: robust and sensitive analytical techniques and mathematical modelling, for example to sample, detect and predict the breadth of synthetic chemicals and polymers and the behaviour of their transformation/degradation products at environmentally relevant concentrations in different media;
- Ecotoxicology: a range of classical and modern approaches such as *in silico* mechanistic modelling of toxico-kinetics and -dynamics and extrapolation across levels of biological organisation; high throughput bioassays and metagenomics tools to link molecular changes to ecologically important endpoints; relevant techniques from human toxicology; the impacts of chemical mixtures and multiple stressors.
- Ecology: application of ecological theory and concepts to the impacts of synthetic chemicals to understand how they interact with other drivers of environmental change; effects at the ecosystem level;
- Environmental risk: including early warning to identify emerging chemical issues, risk assessment, risk communication, decision making and management of chemicals in the environment.

Proposals must also outline a coherent training programme through which students will receive training (as appropriate), in relevant cross-cutting skills relevant to the research areas above including:

- Experimental, statistical and modelling techniques;

- Understanding of regulatory frameworks and the policy context;
- Training in evidence synthesis;
- Communicating to wider audiences.

The training programme should prioritise work on terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems in the UK, but research focused overseas can also be included if suitably justified and sufficiently resourced.

Individual student research projects do not necessarily need to be interdisciplinary, but rather through the wider training programme, all students must be exposed to a multidisciplinary training environment. In this way students will be exposed to techniques, perspectives and context from other disciplines.

In addition to the research training remit identified above, there are a number of transferrable professional, technical and personal development training requirements that must be delivered by the CDT funded through this call:

- Access for all CDT students to placements, internships or other relevant work experience opportunities (this includes UKRI Policy Internships). This does not mean that all students must complete a placement, but that these opportunities must be available to all, and training programmes should be designed with the flexibility to enable students to undertake such work experience opportunities if they wish to do so.
- Explicit careers training and continuous professional development relevant to both academic and non-academic career trajectories. Careers training must take place suitably early in students' training to enable it to inform their choice of training opportunities.
- Strong end-user engagement with all levels of CDT training.
- Dedicated professional skills, and innovation/translation training available to all CDT students.
- Access for all students to appropriate data skills training.
- Opportunities to network across DTP/CDT/Research Council cohorts and gain multidisciplinary perspectives.
- Training Needs Analysis (or equivalent) for all students at the outset of training and the opportunity to discuss individual training requirements throughout their PhD. Discussion of training needs and available opportunities should take place in discussion with end-users as appropriate and be placed within the context of potential future careers.

## **4. Call requirements**

### *4.1 Research capacity*

Applicants must provide evidence within their proposals that they offer sufficient high quality research capacity to deliver training in the areas specified in the remit of the priority area.

### *4.2 Collaboration with end-users and non-HEI partners*

Collaboration with a variety of partners is vital for delivery of excellent multidisciplinary training and for framing research questions to ensure production of research outputs with real-world applications of direct relevance and use to the environmental science community as a whole. Collaboration with end-users and other non-HEI partners must therefore form a

significant part of the CDT's training programme – at both the design and delivery stage – and successful proposals will demonstrate clearly how students will benefit from engagement with multiple types of organisations, on both an individual and a cohort level, via a variety of mechanisms. In outlining their approach to engaging with stakeholders, proposals must evidence a track record of collaborative working and describe a coherent strategy for engaging with multiple stakeholders.

An expectation of the CDT is that NERC funding will be used to leverage additional investment (either cash or in-kind support) from multiple stakeholders.

Applicants must ensure that a number of the studentships offered by the CDT are CASE and 'collaborative' studentships and must embed collaboration with end-users through mechanisms in addition to CASE (e.g. placements, training courses, site visits) within their wider training programme. Applicants must demonstrate clearly within their proposals how this will be achieved.

#### *4.2.1 CASE studentships*

The CDT must ensure that, over the lifetime of the award, at least 25% of the studentships are formal CASE studentships with eligible CASE partners (see Eligibility section for further details). It is important that these requirements are adhered to, and compliance will therefore be monitored via reporting processes. Applicants must demonstrate in their proposals the mechanisms they will use to ensure the CASE conversion requirement is met.

#### *4.2.2 Collaborative (non-CASE) studentships*

In addition to CASE studentships, any number of CDT studentships may be 'collaborative' (i.e. no formal partnership requirements and/or project partners not eligible to be CASE partners). These collaborative studentships will also be monitored and recorded through reporting processes and will be formally recognised by NERC as a success metric as part of its ongoing monitoring of CDT performance. Proposals must describe how such collaborative relationships will be developed and maintained, and the benefits they will provide to students' training.

#### *4.3 Management*

The CDT must have strong leadership and management. It should have both a lead operational manager and steering committee/management board. The steering committee/management board should be comprised of all hosting CDT partners and must also have representation from relevant end-user organisations. It will have overall responsibility for the effective governance of the CDT and its relationship with NERC and provide a strategic needs framework to aid the prioritisation and development of PhD projects.

The CDT must demonstrate that robust and transparent governance arrangements will be in place from the outset of the CDT, which may include the development of formal partnership agreements, communication plans and systems for monitoring the CDT's overall progress and success. NERC strongly encourages applicants to incorporate CDT students into the management/running of activities within the CDT. Where appropriate, formal partnership agreements must be in place ahead of the start of the first student cohort.

The CDT must also commit adequate support for appropriate administrative resource, and proposals must be explicit about how administrative structures will be managed and funded.

#### 4.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In line with [UKRI's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\)](#), NERC must ensure that it supports the most talented students whatever their background and regardless of where and when they undertook their first degree. To ensure that this happens, we require:

- EDI principles should be embedded at all levels and in all aspects of research and training practice in the CDT.
- Selection processes to be open and transparent and enable the potential of the candidate to be assessed whether they are applying on a full- or part-time basis, whether they have prior research training or not, and regardless of their demographic.
- All studentships to be available on a full- or part-time basis and the availability of part-time awards to be clearly set out when advertising funding opportunities.
- Opportunities for NERC-funded studentships to be actively publicised both within and beyond the host Research Organisations.
- Support to be made available to all students to protect their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Careers training and continuous professional development that emphasises the full range of potential career pathways open to students of the CDT.

NERC expects applicants to think imaginatively and demonstrate in their proposals their strategy for EDI to enable wide participation and promote postgraduate research to a diverse base of talented graduate students across the UK. In particular, consideration should be given to training programme flexibility and the ability to address individual students' needs.

#### 4.5 Funding

NERC will award eight notional studentships per annum for three years. A notional studentship consists of sufficient funds to meet the annual Research Council minimum stipend and fee levels, plus additional research and management costs as outlined below, for four full years of PhD study; it is expected that individual students will undertake training over a variety of timeframes (between three and four years as appropriate, depending on the discipline, project and the student's experience/knowledge).

The indicative funding per notional studentship is provided below. The student stipend and fees are indicative estimates only, based on the 2020/21 Research Council minima multiplied by four, and excluding London Allowance (at the time of award, stipend and fees will be indexed to accommodate rises in the minimum stipend and fees levels over the lifetime of the award); the RTSG and management costs are fixed:

Student Stipend	£61,140
Fees	£17,628
Research Training Support Grant	£11,000
Management Costs	£1,500

Total £91,268

CDTs will have flexibility in how they use the funding awarded (subject to the normal [UKRI terms and conditions of training grants](#)), as long as the minimum numbers of students are supported each year (the minimum being the number of notional studentships allocated by NERC).

Given the aforementioned flexibility in use of funding, it will be possible for CDT to use the training grant to support more than the minimum number of students each year. This could be achieved by having students undertake training over a variety of timeframes and by co-funding students from other sources. Students must be funded at least 50% by a NERC training grant (or funded on a fees-only basis, if eligible for fees only) to be classed as a NERC student. It is strongly recommended that, wherever possible, co-funding from non-Research Council sources is used to part-fund NERC students (rather than wholly fund individual students) so that all CDT students have equal access to the opportunities available to Research Council-funded students and can be registered on Je-S for reporting purposes. In situations where it is not possible to part-fund students, the CDT must ensure suitable measures are in place to ensure those students' training experiences are comparable to NERC students', and all relevant data are provided to NERC outside Je-S.

#### *4.6 Implementation and delivery*

The CDT award will provide funding for three years of new student intake – i.e. six years of funding in total, from the start of academic year 2021/22.

#### *4.7 Legacy and impact*

CDTs are supported with the intention of developing a legacy of training excellence from a directed NERC investment. Proposals must demonstrate consideration of the legacy and impacts of the CDT beyond the lifetime of NERC investment.

#### *4.8 Data Management*

It is NERC policy to increase the visibility and awareness of environmental data and to improve their management as a resource. The CDT funded through this call should therefore ensure that relevant [NERC Environmental Data Centres](#) are aware of significant datasets generated, or to be compiled, under the award so that their long-term stewardship can be planned.

#### *4.9 NERC Facilities*

Funding for [NERC services and facilities](#) cannot be requested as part of a training grant proposal. Students wishing to use NERC services and facilities must fund the costs of doing so using RTSG funds or gain access to facilities through other routes. Anyone wishing to use a NERC service or facility must contact the facility to seek agreement that they can provide the service required.

#### *4.10 Reporting requirements and monitoring*

There will be mandatory annual reporting requirements for the CDT, in addition to the standard studentships information captured through the Je-S Studentship Details



functionality. This information will be used by NERC to report on the success of our training investments to government and other partners. Information provided will also be used to provide assurance that the CDT is being managed appropriately and is progressing in accordance with its original funding proposal, the NERC Training Strategy, and the aims and expectations outlined in this Announcement of Opportunity document. This additional reporting will take the form of an annual return. Indicative reporting headings include:

- Information regarding student recruitment (including demographics of unsuccessful applicants);
- Information regarding the CDT student population, including those funded by alternative sources to the CDT award;
- CASE studentships and other collaborative partner engagement;
- Information regarding partners' in-kind investment and co-funding;
- Cohort-level training activities;
- Cross-CDT/DTP training activities;
- CDT-level success stories and impacts (individual student research outputs will be captured via Researchfish).

In addition to annual reports, NERC will conduct regular institutional visits to the CDT. The CDT will also be expected to respond to other reporting requirements when requested.

## **5. Application process**

### *5.1 Eligibility*

This opportunity is open to organisations eligible for NERC research grant funding, i.e. applicants based at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), approved Research Council Institutes (RCIs) and approved Independent Research Organisations (IROs). Full details of [approved RCIs and IROs](#) can be found on the UKRI website.

Organisations that are not eligible for NERC research grant funding may act as Collaborative Partners and information regarding the nature of this collaboration must be included within the proposal.

Each CDT must include an accredited higher education PhD awarding body.

Involvement in a CDT may take two forms:

- i. **Hosting Partners:** organisations that are both (a) eligible for NERC funding; and (b) intending to provide the principal base (host) for students during the tenure of the award.
- ii. **Collaborative Partners:** (a) those institutions not eligible for NERC funding; and/or (b) organisations that are eligible for NERC funding but do not intend to provide the principal base (host) for students during the award. Collaborative Partners provide additional benefits to the students' experience e.g. real-world experience, training, equipment, facilities, understanding or opportunity.

The proposal should identify one of the Hosting Partners as the administrative lead (the administrative lead does not have to be a higher education PhD award-making body). Identification of the administrative lead should not be interpreted as recognition of a dominant partner which will host the majority of studentships.

### 5.1.1 CASE partner eligibility

CASE studentships must be delivered in collaboration with non-academic partners from industry, business, public and the third/civil sectors. Any organisation eligible to receive NERC research funding will not be eligible to act as a CASE partner.

### 5.2 How to apply

#### 5.2.1 Outline Proposals

#### **Closing date 16:00 - Wednesday 6 May 2020**

The outline proposal stage will be used to identify projects that will be invited to submit a full proposal. The outline proposals will be assessed by a panel. Any sift of proposals will be made on the basis of an assessment against the criteria for the call. The panel will provide brief feedback to applicants summarising why their proposal was successful/unsuccessful. No further feedback will be available.

Outline proposals must be submitted by email to [NERC Talent and Skills](#) using the form provided on the NERC website and in *Annex A* by at **16:00** on **Wednesday 6 May 2020**. Any proposal that is submitted after this deadline, is incomplete, or does not meet the eligibility criteria, will be office rejected and will not be considered.

All outline proposals must use the form provided on the NERC website and in *Annex A*. The Case for Support section of the form must not exceed 5 sides of A4 in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal which has used any of these font types within their submission will be rejected. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Embedded diagrams or pictures or numerical formulae may contain text that is smaller than 11 point but applicants should ensure that the font is legible. Text in tables and figure labels not within embedded diagrams should be at least 11 point. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them.

Applicants will need to provide details under the following headings:

- i. Research Excellence
- ii. Training Excellence
- iii. Multidisciplinary Training Environment
- iv. Partnership Operational Management (Quality Assurance and Attracting Excellent Students)

For all proposals, applicants are strongly encouraged to include a high-level vision statement for their CDT within the Case for Support section of their outline proposal.

No other attachments will be accepted, including letters of support. Applicants are **not** required to demonstrate any agreed or expected in-kind support or additional funding at the outline proposal stage, although a clear strategy for engagement with multiple stakeholders should be presented.

### 5.2.2 Full Proposals

#### **Closing Date: 16:00 - Wednesday 5 August 2020**

Following the outline proposal assessment process, applicants will be notified whether they have been invited to submit a full proposal for this funding opportunity. Feedback from the outline proposal assessment process will be provided following the announcement of invitations to submit full proposals.

Full proposal must be submitted using the Research Councils' Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S). Applicants should select Proposal Type - 'Studentship Proposal' and then select the Scheme – 'Doctoral Training' and the Call – 'CDT August 2020'.

The CDT call will close on Je-S at **16:00 on Wednesday 5 August 2020** and it will not be possible to submit to the call after this time. Applicants should leave enough time for their proposal to pass through their organisation's Je-S submission route before this date. Any proposal that is incomplete, or does not meet NERC's eligibility criteria, will be office rejected and will not be considered.

All full proposals must use the form provided on the NERC website and in *Annex B*. The Case for Support section of the form must not exceed 14 pages of A4 in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal which has used any of these font types within their submission will be rejected. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Embedded diagrams or pictures or numerical formulae may contain text that is smaller than 11 point but applicants should ensure that the font is legible. Text in tables and figure labels not within embedded diagrams should be at least 11 point. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them.

Please note that on submission to council ALL non PDF documents are converted to PDF, the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document.

Additionally where non-standard fonts are present, and even if the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that where a document contains any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams etc.), the document should be converted to PDF prior to attaching it to the proposal.

Applicants will need to provide details under the following headings:

- i. Research excellence
- ii. Training excellence
- iii. Multidisciplinary Training Environment
- iv. Partnership Operational Management (Quality Assurance and Attracting Excellent Students)

At the full proposal stage, applicants must provide evidence of any financial or in-kind commitment agreed by partners. This may take the form of a statement in the Case for Support or a signed letter of support (up to 2 sides of A4 per organisation). Only letters of support outlining agreed commitments (financial or in-kind) to the CDT will be accepted at the full proposal stage – no other attachments will be accepted.

A single proposal should be submitted from the administrative lead partner for each of the outline and full proposal application stages.

## 6. Assessment process

Both the outline and full proposals will be assessed by an assessment panel, consisting of independent experts in postgraduate training provision and the research areas of the call. Proposals will be assessed against the following equally weighted criteria:

- Research Excellence
- Training Excellence
- Multidisciplinary Training Environment
- Partnership Operational Management

The full assessment criteria and scoring definitions to be used by the assessment panel are given in *Annexes C & D*. The assessment process for both panels is provided below:

### 6.1 Outline Proposals

Applicants will not be invited to present or attend an interview at the outline proposal stage of the application process.

Following the outline proposal assessment panel meeting, feedback will be provided on all outline proposals and successful applicants will be informed if they have been invited to submit full proposals.

### 6.2 Full Proposals

The full proposal assessment process includes an applicant presentation and interview with the assessment panel. NERC will try to provide early notice of an invitation to attend, but applicants should note that the assessment panel meeting is currently planned for the week commencing **21 September 2020**.

Following the full proposal assessment panel meeting, feedback for all full proposals will be provided.

## 7. Timetable

Overview of the call timetable:

- 20 February 2020: Outline proposals call open
- 6 May 2020: Closing date for outline proposals
- w/c 1 June 2020: Outline proposal Assessment Panel meeting
- 10 June 2020: Full proposals call open
- 5 August 2020: Closing date for full proposals
- w/c 21 September 2020: Assessment Panel meeting, with applicant interviews
- October 2020: Decision communicated to applicants
- Autumn 2021: First CDT studentships commence.

For further information please contact [NERC Talent and Skills](#).

## Annex A: Outline Proposal – Application Form and Case for Support Form



**Natural  
Environment  
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NERC, Polaris House, North Star Avenue,  
Swindon, Wiltshire, United Kingdom, SN2  
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COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION 2016/679 (GDPR). In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), UKRI capture and process personal information in-line with current data protection legislation. Further details may be found in the [UKRI Privacy Notice](#).

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### Centre for Doctoral Training OUTLINE PROPOSAL

**Administrative Lead Partner** (This is the organisation that will receive the funding for the CDT from NERC, and will be the main point of contact between the two bodies).

Organisation		Internal Research Organisation Reference	
Division or Department			

**Lead Applicant** (The individual should be from the Administrative Lead Partner and be the administrative lead/head of the CDT).

Name	Organisation	Division or Department	CDT Role	Email

**Hosting Partner** (Please only include HEI or Research Organisation partners that will be acting as hosts for CDT students. Other partners should be mentioned within the Case for Support as appropriate).

Name	Organisation	Division or Department	Email

**Title [up to 150 characters]**

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NERC, Polaris House, North Star Avenue,  
Swindon, Wiltshire, United Kingdom, SN2  
1EU Telephone: +44 (0) 1793 411500

## **Centre for Doctoral Training – Outline Proposal Case for Support**

Please justify and evidence your proposal using the following headings:

- Research Excellence
- Training Excellence
- Multidisciplinary Training Environments
- Partnership Operational Management

This Case for Support must be completed on standard A4 sized paper in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal which has used either of these font types within their submission will be rejected. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Embedded diagrams or pictures or numerical formulae may contain text that is smaller than 11 point but applicants should ensure that the font is legible. Text in tables and figure labels not within embedded diagrams should be at least 11 point. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them.

This Case for Support section must NOT exceed 5 sides of A4.

\*Please start the case for support section on a new blank page and ensure that this does not exceed the page limit.

**Annex B: Full Proposal – Application Form and Case for Support Form**



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**Centre for Doctoral Training FULL PROPOSAL**

**Administrative Lead Partner** (This is the organisation that will receive the funding for the CDT from NERC, and will be the main point of contact between the two bodies.).

Organisation		Internal Research Organisation Reference	
Division or Department			

**Lead Applicant** (The individual should be from the Administrative Lead Partner and be the administrative lead/head of the CDT).

Name	Organisation	Division or Department	CDT Role	Email

**Hosting Partner** (Please only include HEI or Research Organisation partners that will be acting as hosts for CDT students).

Name	Organisation	Division or Department	Email

**Title [up to 150 characters]**

**CDT Summary [maximum 4000 characters with spaces]**

Please provide a summary of the proposed training in terms appropriate for a general audience, including details on what will make your training offer unique and what its impact will be.



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## **Centre for Doctoral Training – Full Proposal Case for Support**

Please justify and evidence your proposal using the following headings:

- Research Excellence
- Training Excellence
- Multidisciplinary Training Environments
- Partnership Operational Management

This Case for Support must be completed on standard A4 sized paper in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal which has used either of these font types within their submission will be rejected. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Embedded diagrams or pictures or numerical formulae may contain text that is smaller than 11 point but applicants should ensure that the font is legible. Text in tables and figure labels not within embedded diagrams should be at least 11 point. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them.

**This Case for Support section must NOT exceed 14 sides of A4.**

\*Please start the case for support section on a new blank page and ensure that this does not exceed the page limit.



**Annex C: Proposal Assessment Criteria**

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Key aspects for an outstanding CDT</b>	<b>Factors and Evidence that might be discussed*</b>
<p>1. Research excellence (25%)</p>	<p>The training and training environment must include scientifically excellent and original research within NERC's remit, and specifically within the remit of the call.</p> <p>Critical mass of relevant researchers/teams/projects within the specific remit of the call to allow students to be supported effectively and sufficiently exposed to excellent research and researchers in the relevant areas.</p>	<p>Number of active NERC-funded research projects and PIs at host ROs, specifically within the remit of the call.</p> <p>REF 2014 profiles relevant to the remit of the call. Standing in the appropriate academic community – national, international etc.</p> <p>Institutional commitment to research excellence, specifically within the remit of the call.</p> <p>Amount of NERC and Research Council research income in research areas specific to the call.</p>
<p>2. Training excellence (25%)</p>	<p>Students are part of an active research and training community and managed as a cohort.</p> <p>Excellent scientific training and transferable/ professional skills development opportunities.</p> <p>Excellent training and support for supervisors.</p> <p>Challenging and relevant, but feasible, projects.</p> <p>Co-development of projects and training programmes with end-users to ensure research and skills are tailored to their needs from the outset.</p> <p>Timely access to world- class facilities, direct experience of cutting-edge techniques, technologies and up to date methodologies.</p>	<p>Integration of students into the relevant teams/projects/departments/schools.</p> <p>Mechanisms for supervision, supervisor training, and monitoring of both student and supervisor.</p> <p>How generalist and specialist development needs of individual students will be identified and addressed.</p> <p>Personal/professional/career learning and development that students will receive.</p> <p>Collaborative opportunities and end-user engagement in training programmes – which may include training delivery, internships, industrial placements, overseas studies, and co-supervisory arrangements if appropriate.</p> <p>Mechanisms to ensure the development of independent researchers and world- leading scientists.</p>

		<p>Access to, and encouragement of, peer-to-peer learning and support.</p> <p>Completion rates, publication and first destination data for students hosted within CDT institutions.</p> <p>Employability of graduates.</p> <p>Leveraged support for the CDT (either in-kind or financial).</p>
<p>3. Multidisciplinary Training Environments (25%)</p>	<p>Training is embedded in multidisciplinary research environments.</p> <p>Excellent opportunities to network with researchers and students from other disciplines.</p> <p>Excellent opportunities for collaborative projects involving end-user partners, including CASE studentships, internships/placements, and end-user co-supervision.</p> <p>End user engagement in all aspects of training, from individual projects to cohort-level specialist and transferrable skills training: Students will gain value from interaction with a wide range of end-users and leave equipped with skills applicable to the environment sector and relevant to policymakers and regulators, industry and business, and NGOs and charities.</p>	<p>How students will be made aware of the context of their research and how it relates to other disciplines, and its application outside of academia.</p> <p>Supervisory or wider advisory team engagement in research outside the relevant discipline(s).</p> <p>Ability to expose students to different disciplines via, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with cohorts from different disciplines beyond the CDT through transferrable skills training, seminars/conferences and networking opportunities.</li> <li>• Placing students within multidisciplinary research teams.</li> <li>• Opportunities to attend specialist training courses in other disciplines where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Partnership Operational Management (25%)</p>	<p>EDI principles embedded at all levels and in all aspects of research and training practice in the CDT. Robust mechanisms to promote postgraduate research to a</p>	<p>Demonstration of a strategy for embedding EDI principles in all aspects of the CDT. Evidence of support available to all students to protect their physical and mental health and wellbeing.</p>

	<p>diverse base of talented graduate students across the UK, with all studentships offered on a full- or part-time basis through an open and transparent selection process. CDT programme and processes are sufficiently flexible to enable them to be tailored to individual needs.</p> <p>Robust and transparent governance arrangements and strategy for managing partnerships between or within organisations.</p> <p>Agreement by all parties of a robust mechanism for aligning ways of working and sharing resources and finances between different organisations (including non-academic partners).</p> <p>Adequate dedicated administrative resource.</p> <p>Clear strategy for engagement with end-users, appropriate to the scope of the CDT, in all aspects of training from the outset of the CDT.</p> <p>Well-considered mechanism for planning, managing and monitoring training. This includes strategic and systematic approaches to project selection and attracting and selecting the best-fit students for projects. Student recruitment prioritises potential for excellence in studentship outcomes (i.e. what an individual can bring to a project and the graduate they</p>	<p>Management and governance structure, including mechanisms for agreeing management arrangements and monitoring CDT's overall progress and success.</p> <p>Representation of different parties (including students and end-users) within the CDT's management structure.</p> <p>Amount of dedicated administrative resource.</p> <p>Strategy for engaging with end-users and other collaborators.</p> <p>Systems and processes for assessing the suitability of supervisors and projects.</p> <p>Mechanisms for allocating studentships within the CDT and recruiting the best-fit students.</p> <p>Processes for student induction, progression, monitoring and submission.</p> <p>Demonstration of Success Stories.</p> <p>Establishing cohorts beyond the NERC funded students by using the CDT as a magnet/nucleus for research and training activities.</p> <p>Arrangements for management of data generated by studentship projects, and for returning accurate and timely data on studentships to NERC.</p>
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	<p>will be as a result of the DTP's training).</p> <p>Well-defined legacy of the CDT beyond the lifetime of any NERC investment, including research and training outcomes and impacts, and opportunities to maximise NERC's investment.</p>	
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**\*Please note**, the types of evidence that may be considered are provided **as examples only** – applicants should develop their proposals in whatever way they feel is most appropriate to address the requirements of the call and provide appropriate evidence to support their proposed training programme and any claims made within the proposal. The assessment panel will use this table as a guide when assessing proposals, but will not expect all proposals to include all types of evidence listed within this table, nor will they ignore additional evidence of excellence or innovative approaches to addressing the requirements of the call.

## **Annex D: Overall Excellence Score Definitions**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Usual Indicators</b>
<b>Excellent quality proposal</b>	
10	The proposal is outstanding and represents world-leading standards. Highest priority for funding.
9	The proposal is excellent and represents world-class standards. Very high priority for funding.
8	The proposal is very good and contains aspects of excellence. High priority for funding.
<b>Good quality proposal</b>	
7	The proposal is good and is internationally competitive. Should be funded if possible.
6	The proposal is good and on the borderline between nationally and internationally competitive. Potentially fundable.
5	The proposal is good and has some merit but is not at the leading edge. It is suitable for funding in principle but in a competitive context is not a priority.
<b>Potentially useful proposal</b>	
4	The proposal is good and has some merit, but has a number of weaknesses. Not recommended for funding.
3	The proposal is satisfactory. It would provide something useful, but fails to provide reasonable evidence and justification for funding. Not recommended for funding.
<b>Unacceptable proposal</b>	
2	The proposal is weak, and has only a few strengths. Not suitable for funding.
1	The proposal is unsatisfactory and is unlikely to train students successfully. Not suitable for funding.
0	For special cases, e.g. flawed in approach, subject to serious difficulties, does not address operational risks, sufficiently un-clearly written so it cannot be properly assessed, or outside of NERC remit.