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Antarctic Survey**

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**
Department of Earth
Sciences



**Natural
Environment
Research Council**



CREATES

NERC Doctoral Landscape Award

Student Handbook

October 2025

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Introduction

Welcome to the Cambridge Research Experience and Advanced Training for Environmental Scientists (CREATES) NERC Doctoral Landscape Award. This document aims to provide some basic information about the aims and scope of the DLA, and about how it operates. It will also direct you to other resources that give you more information about how NERC and the host institutes operate, and about training possibilities. If neither the handbook nor the DLA website at [NERC CREATES DLA | Cambridge NERC Doctoral Landscape Awards \(Training Partnerships\)](#) give you the information you need, don't hesitate to contact us.



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Doctoral Landscape Awards (DLAs) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Studying for a Ph.D. provides students with an opportunity to carry out independent study and to get involved in specialised academic research. Ph.D. training should also be multidisciplinary, and lead to improved future career prospects, in whatever sector that career may be.

In 2024, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) launched a new doctoral investment framework under which all UKRI-funded doctoral training will be delivered to train the next generation of researchers in the environmental sciences. The schemes build on a rich history of doctoral investments which support discovery-driven research at universities across the UK, and UKRI allocate a significant portion of their funds for doctorates through the doctoral landscape awards (DLA) system, which promotes collaborative and multidisciplinary training within consortia of research institutions.

Doctoral landscape awards provide:

- broad, flexible funding to support talented doctoral students to contribute to a vibrant, internationally attractive and world-leading research and innovation system
- breadth and diversity in the research supported and to ensure that as a community we are rapidly responsive to new and emerging research ideas and areas
- opportunities for a variety of engagement with non-academic partners

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is the UK's largest funder of independent environmental science, training and innovation, delivered through universities and research centres. NERC's vision is "To place environmental science at the heart of responsible management of our planet...funding ambitious and adventurous research and innovation, and providing training, skills and infrastructure the UK needs to remain at the forefront of environmental science" The aim of the NERC DLAs, as stated on the NERC website, is to "deliver world-class doctoral research, training and development within dynamic and supportive research and innovation environments"

NERC scientists study the whole planet, from the edge of the atmosphere to the centre of the Earth and excel at revealing the environmental challenges confronting the world. Tackling these complex problems requires us to go further, bringing together deep understanding of environmental science with a whole-systems approach.

CREATES NERC DLA is an innovative, inclusive, and interdisciplinary PhD training programme dedicated to preparing the next generation of environmental scientists. Our postgraduate training is delivered in collaboration with partners from a wide range of backgrounds. These include industry, specialist research organisations, charities, non-governmental organisations, government bodies and many more. This is to ensure NERC CREATES DLA students are equipped with the skills and experiences to allow them to become world-leaders in their chosen careers.

The University of Cambridge is a major recipient of NERC grant funding, and numerous departments across the university have researchers within the NERC remit. The British Antarctic Survey (BAS), also situated in Cambridge, is a NERC institute. The DLA award to Cambridge and BAS covers a nominal 15 students per year.

Studentships funded by DLAs should fit within the NERC remit: “NERC's remit includes terrestrial, marine, freshwater, science-based archaeology, atmospheric and polar sciences, and Earth observation. (NERC) scientists study and monitor the physical, chemical and biological processes on which our planet and life itself depend” (from the NERC website). NERC’s strategy seeks to enhance the UK’s capacity to address environmental issues through innovative research and collaboration. By investing in science and fostering partnerships, NERC aims to contribute significantly to a sustainable and resilient future for both the environment and society.

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) supports research in areas including:

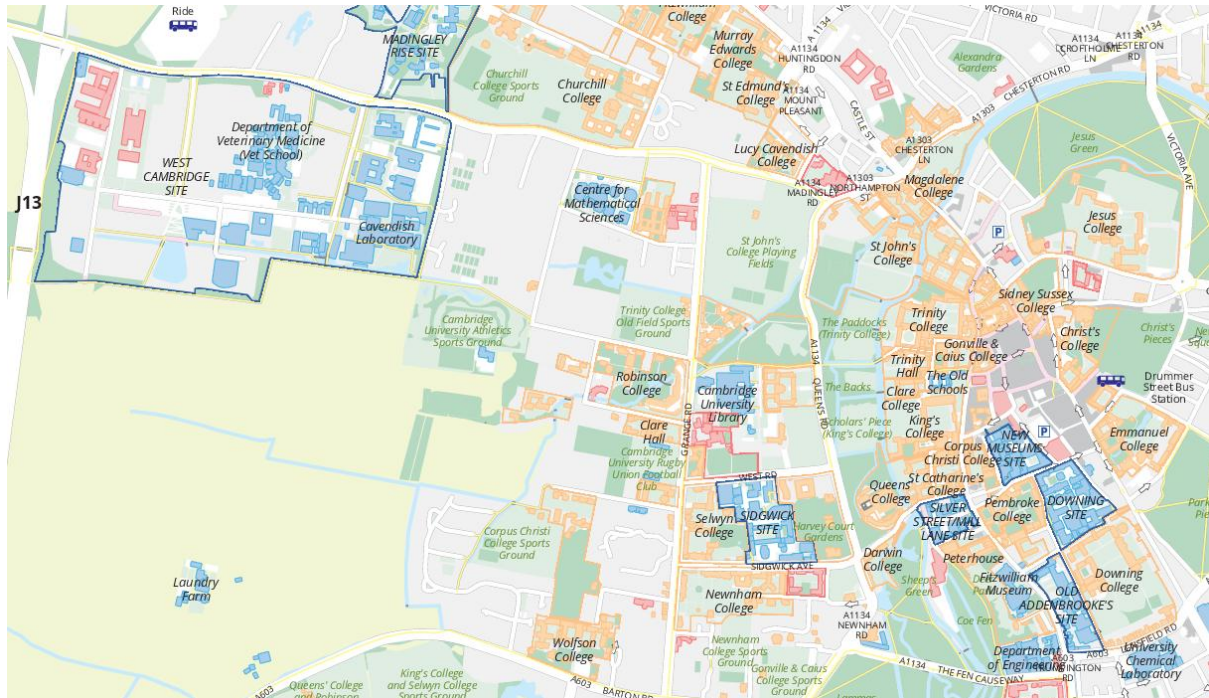
- atmospheric physics and chemistry
- climate and climate change
- ecology, biodiversity and systematics
- geosciences
- marine environments
- polar sciences
- science-based archaeology
- terrestrial and freshwater environments.

What is the Cambridge Research Experience and Advanced Training for Environmental Scientists (CREATES) DLA?

The Cambridge DLA comprises leading Cambridge University research departments together with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). Cambridge and BAS have an exceptional pool of talented researchers working right across the NERC remit, and this is the basis for our DLA. The DLA is embedded in a pre-eminent research university with a vibrant culture and a tradition of cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research. Cambridge attracts outstanding applicants to its degree programs and produces postgraduates who assume leading roles in industry, academia and government. The partner departments each include a much wider cohort of Ph.D. students funded by various means. They provide a diverse research environment which supports specialist training needs while the DTP, drawing on the wider resources of the University, ensures that students acquire essential transferrable and professional skills.

The departments that can host students within the CREATES DLA are:

- [British Antarctic Survey](#)
- [Archaeology](#)
- [Chemistry](#)
- [DAMTP](#) (Applied Mathematics & Theoretical Physics)
- [Earth Sciences](#)
- [Genetics](#)
- [Geography](#) (including the [Scott Polar Research Institute](#) (SPRI))
- [Plant Sciences](#)
- [Zoology](#)



All the component departments of the DLA are within easy reach, which is important where students are co-supervised, as well as for attending seminars and training events. Archaeology, Earth Sciences, Genetics, Geography and Plant Sciences are all on the Downing Site (bottom right of the map), with Zoology nearby in the New Museums sits. Chemistry is a 2-minute cycle ride to the south, with SPRI next door. DAMTP is at the Centre for Mathematical Sciences (top centre of the map). The Bullard Labs (part of Earth Sciences) is at the 'Madingley Rise' site (top left, while BAS is located nearby, in one of the buildings coloured pink on the map in the West Cambridge site, next to 'J13'. The furthest locations (Chemistry and BAS) are a 15-20minute cycle ride apart. There are buses from the city centre that take you to the Madingley Road Park and Ride (opposite BAS), and some that stop in the West Cambridge site (the cheaper university-subsidised U-service).

In addition to the host partners, CREATES has links to partners across four membership networks, representing the industrial, policy and conservation sectors:

- [Centre for Science and Policy \(CSaP\)](#), with a network of over 200 policy fellows – individuals in influential policy positions who have spent time in Cambridge interacting with academics.
- [Cambridge Network](#), a cross-sector organisation with 1200 members ranging from small start-ups and charities to major employers that brings people together from business and academia, to share ideas, encouraging collaboration.
- [Cambridge Cleantech](#), a specialised umbrella organisation with 400 members supporting the growth of environmental goods and services in the Greater Cambridge area.

- [Cambridge Conservation Initiative \(CCI\)](#), a unique collaboration between the University of Cambridge and leading biodiversity conservation organisations, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and Fauna and Flora International.

These network partners are involved in co-designing and supervising many PhD projects, ensuring a significant number of projects with an applied character. Individual partner organisations may fund or co-fund studentships in the NERC remit and take part in CASE or other collaborative studentships (discussed later). A number act as training partners or are simply available to provide advice and potentially placements and experience.

Research themes and governance

The DLA is organised around three major research themes: Biology and Conservation, Climate Change and Environmental Processes, and Solid Earth and Natural Hazards.

Each theme has a panel, which conducts the recruitment process each year, and also advises the DLA Management Committee on other matters. There are usually 3 core members of each theme panel in each academic year (generally distributed across partner departments).

Membership is reviewed each year and adjusted to spread the load of work while still retaining experience.

The DLA is administered by a Chair (the current Chair is Prof Alex Piotrowski, Earth Sciences) assisted by academic Leads for Recruitment, Training, External Partners and Welfare and Progress, along with a BAS Liaison. The DLA is staffed by an Administrator (Ruth Noble) who is hosted in Earth Sciences.

The operation of the DLA is overseen by a management committee, which meets in Michaelmas Term and again in Easter Term. Membership of the Cambridge NERC CREATES DLA Management Team is:

- DLA Chair
- Leads for Recruitment, Training, External Partners, and Welfare and Progress
- BAS Liaison
- Core members of each of the three DLA Theme Panels
- DLA Administrator
- 3 student representatives (the aim is to have one from each year and from each theme)
- Representatives of departments not otherwise included above

CASE studentships

“CASE studentships (Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering) provide doctoral students with first-rate research training experience as part of a research collaboration between academic and non-academic partner organisations” (from the NERC website), giving students access to training, facilities and expertise not available in an academic setting. The non-academic partner may be from industry, business, public bodies or the third sector, so long as the organisation is not eligible to receive NERC funding directly. CASE partners benefit from motivated, highly capable PhD students doing innovative research for their organisation, helping the student and the CASE partner to build business and research collaborations.

NERC encourages studentships to involve a CASE partner and indeed requires that at least 25% of a DLA's nominal studentships have a CASE component. We strongly encourage you to explore the potential CASE partnerships that your research can take on, in your first term while you are finalising your research title.

CASE partners are encouraged to financially contribute to a student's research project for costs incurred when visiting and working in their establishment, the costs of necessary materials, and facilities not already accessed by the student that are integral to the CASE research. CASE students must spend between three and eighteen months in total with their CASE partner in a workplace outside the academic environment (this does not need to occur in one continuous period) and will be co-supervised by the CASE partner.

A CASE studentship is generally focussed on a problem with a direct application, which might be to a commercial opportunity, a policy goal or a societal need. It provides the student with additional facilities as well as a broader experience. It should generally provide the non-academic partner with assistance in researching a problem relevant to their organisation, as well as access to the intellect of the student and the academic supervisor.

Placements

Each year, NERC and UKRI advertise policy internships – essentially 3 months working with a government or other policy section related to science to gain training and experience of how research can inform policy making, undertaken as part of the doctoral studentship. Policy making is carried out across a wide range of organisations, including government departments, civil society, groups within parliament and devolved administrations, as well as other public bodies. These internships provide excellent opportunity to gain experience within one of a selected group of highly impactful organisations related to UK policy, and should you undertake a UKRI Policy Internship, it will be considered as integral to your studies.

Many other internship opportunities may also be available to you, either through your own findings, advice from training facilitator and supervisors, or through advertising from organisations. If a placement is not considered as integral to your research, you will intermit from your studies to undertake the placement, and then return to your studies once it is finished. The DLA can fund up to 3 months of an intermission for a non-integral placement. More information can be found on the [DLA website](#).

All students are encouraged to apply for these (and similar opportunities) but you should talk first to your supervisor to make sure they are happy that this is the right moment. You will need to complete a research proposal to outline the key aims and objectives for your placement, as well as get signatures from your supervisor and the DLA on a funding permission form, so contact us in good time before the deadline too. We can talk you through all of the details and logistics of a placement, as well as send you the forms that we will need completed before you go. If you are successful in securing a non-integral placement then your studentship can be extended for 3 months and it is essential that you also notify your department so that this extension can be arranged.

Placements for Overseas students

There are currently visa restrictions in relation to placements which do not align with UKRI expectations. This is a well-known issue, and we are hoping for changes to be made which allow international students to be able to undertake placements which are not integral to the PhD research but are considered as part of a funded programme. Revised guidance is currently with the Home Office for consideration. As such, at this time, we must apply current policy.

Recent progress in this has led to more opportunity than we have had up until this point and now allow some internships to be undertaken by international students.

Internships will now be considered integral and managed through leave to work away, with no additional time provided for:

- internships that are integral to a student's research; or
- UKRI-funded students who secure a competitive UKRI-funded internships

This means that students on a student visa can undertake placements as follows:

- A full-time placement that is integral to the PhD research and will therefore ultimately contribute to the thesis and therefore assessed as part of the examination. If this is applicable, the student would need to apply for Leave to Work Away and this must be approved before starting the placement. Ultimately whether a placement is integral would be an academic decision for the Department and where this is possible to justify, it is the easiest route to being able to undertake this activity. The ISO will be required to report the placement details (organisation, location and dates) to the Home Office. **UKRI Policy Internships are now considered as integral, for all students.**

Permitted policy internships are restricted to UKRI policy internships. The process has changed though so that UKRI policy internships will be considered integral for all students and students will work away rather than intermit.

- A part-time placement that is not integral to the PhD research but can be undertaken in accordance with the visa work conditions up to 20 hours a week. However, this would have to be in addition to full-time study and not as part of it.

Otherwise, a student can intermit in order to undertake an internship, whether in the UK or overseas, but this would mean the University would be required to withdraw sponsorship of the student visa at the start of the intermission. In this scenario, the student visa would be cancelled by the Home Office, and an application for a new student visa would need to be made in time to resume studies at the end of the intermission which would mean additional cost. If the internship is in the UK, the student would need to apply for a different visa for work purposes in order to undertake it. The internship provider would need to advise whether they would provide work-related visa sponsorship for the internship, and if so, whether this application could be made in the UK.

DLA funding for students

NERC, through the DLA, provides, for each studentship:

- University fees
- Stipend (living expenses)
- Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)
- Management fee

According to UKRI, the National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2025/26 is £20,780pa, and this is what will normally be paid to students. Although the Cambridge PhD is a 3 year course, many students exceed this, and the NERC DLA provides funding for 3.5 years. NERC expect that your doctoral project should be designed so that your doctoral training, wider training and submission of your thesis are achievable within the timeframe of your funded period. There are no DLA funds available to fund students who have not submitted after their 42nd month (except those with agreed extensions due to e.g. internships, sick leave, parental leave). Students who complete before month 42 may, under UKRI rules, be paid until the end of the quarter in which they submit, provided they are still working on material relevant to their Ph.D.

The RTSG allocated by NERC to each student is £11,000 for the full length of the studentship, and is intended to cover items like laboratory consumables, travel (e.g. to conferences and fieldwork), and training costs. The DLA retains £1,000 of this for centrally organised training costs, and the remaining amount (£10,000) is transferred at the start of the studentship to the host department, along with the fee and stipend. Each department may have different policies

about how this RTSG is used: some may simply state that each student has the same amount and delegate spending to the supervisor, while others may administer the funds centrally so that students with more costs receive more than the nominal amount and vice versa. Students should check this with their supervisor and department. Non-specialised computer equipment should not be purchased with RTSG.

For students hosted by BAS, the funds are transferred to the University department where the student is registered. The department administers the student stipend, and BAS manage the use of the RTSG.

Other funding information:

The CREATES DLA grant reference number is **UKRI1346**.

Publications and other forms of media communication, including media appearances, press releases and conferences, must acknowledge the support received from the research council, quoting the grant reference number if appropriate. Please ensure that journal publications include an acknowledgement in the standard format agreed by funders and publishers as below:

This work was supported by the Natural Environment Research Council grant number UKRI1346.

For more information on publication of work and open access please see [Acknowledging your funding – UKRI](#)

Leave

All students starting from the 1 October will follow the new UKRI terms and conditions (published 1st October 2025) around leave and extensions. Students who started prior to this date will follow the terms and conditions in place at the time they started their doctoral studentship.

Absence Arrangements for UKRI-Funded Students

As a UKRI-funded postgraduate researcher, you are entitled and encouraged to take annual leave. You are also entitled to a range of leave options designed to support your wellbeing and personal circumstances. These provisions are intended to ensure you can take necessary time away from your studies without financial penalty or academic disadvantage.

1. Family Leave

You may take leave for the following family-related reasons.

Maternity Leave: up to 52 weeks, with stipend paid at full rate for 26 weeks, statutory rate for 13 weeks, and unpaid for the final 13 weeks.

Paternity/Partner's Leave: up to 2 weeks paid leave within 52 weeks of the birth.

Adoption Leave: equivalent to maternity or paternity/partner's leave depending on your role in the adoption.

Neonatal Care Leave: up to 12 weeks paid leave if your child requires hospital care after birth.

Unpaid Parental Leave: up to 1 month each year unpaid leave, with studentship end date extended accordingly.

Leave Relating to Death During a Period of Maternity: equivalent to maternity leave if you are the partner of a mother or main adopter who dies during or shortly before a period of maternity or adoption leave.

2. Medical Leave

Medical leave covers:

- Illness (physical or mental health)
- Pregnancy-related illness
- Antenatal appointments
- Fertility treatment (if leave is medically advised)
- Disability-related illness or appointments
- Gender reassignment (if leave is medically advised)

You may receive stipend for up to **28 weeks** in a rolling 12-month period, with a maximum of **52 weeks** across the studentship. Medical evidence may be required.

3. Additional Leave

This includes:

- **Special Leave** – for bereavement, pregnancy loss, domestic emergencies (up to 10 days paid)
- **Baby Loss Leave** – equivalent to maternity or paternity/partner's leave if the baby is stillborn or dies within 52 weeks of birth
- **Carer's Leave** – up to 5 days paid leave per year for caring responsibilities
- **Disability Leave (Delayed Adjustments)** – paid leave if reasonable adjustments are delayed
- **Health & Safety Leave** – paid leave if a safety concern prevents study
- **Public Duties** – paid leave for duties including jury service.

As a result of some periods of Additional Leave you may be eligible for a studentship extension as well as continued payment during the Leave itself. Please see Section 5 below for more information.

4. Recording periods of leave

Periods of absence must be recorded – this is a requirement of UKRI, and the following processes are in place to make sure that this takes place. What you need to do will depend on the duration and reason for your period of absence.

Absence of 10 days and more	Apply for medical or non-medical intermission (Changes to your student status Cambridge students) via your CamSIS account. Inform your funding administrator of your intended absence, giving the dates, duration and reason for the absence as soon as you are able to. The funding administrator will calculate your entitlement to funding during your absence.
Absence of 5-9 days	If an extension has been agreed, students must complete the leave request form via CamSIS. This form will be circulated to the supervisor and department for formal approval. If an extension is not required, please follow departmental processes. Inform your funding administrator of your absence, giving the dates, duration and reason for the absence as soon as you are able to.
Absence of under 5 days	Inform your funding administrator of your absence, giving the dates, duration and reason for the absence as soon as you are able. Please also follow your departmental process.

Please contact the DLA on ntp-admin@esc.cam.ac.uk to let us know about any periods of absence.

5. Extensions Due to Leave

Studentships may be extended to account for:

- Family Leave
- Medical Leave (over one week, mandatory if over one month)
- Additional Leave (over one week)

Extensions of up to 12 months can be approved by your institution. Longer extensions or those beyond the grant end date require UKRI approval.

We highly recommend that you keep your own record of leave taken outside of these formal requirements - it is important that you keep an up-to-date record for NERC auditing purposes.

International students should ensure they are aware of what is permitted as part of their visa in terms of time taken out for leave. Unfortunately, due to some restrictions, you may not be eligible for all of the paid leave/funded extensions provided.

What does it mean to be a member of the DLA?

If you are funded fully or partly by the DLA then you are a DLA student, and a NERC student (Note: the DLA must be covering at least 50% of eligible costs). This comes with some privileges and requirements.

Cambridge's Standard Terms and Conditions for Postgraduate funding (sent with your offer letter), as well as UKRI T&Cs will apply for the duration of your studentship.

In Cambridge we are fortunate that there are several other sources of funding, such as the Gates Foundation, Cambridge Trust, and college funds; additionally, students arrive with funds from other sources such as foreign government fellowships. Students with any source of funding who are within the DLA (i.e. NERC) remit will be part of the "DLA cohort", which is about double the size of the DLA-funded group (i.e. the cohort is about 30-40 students per year). They will be eligible to receive information from the DLA and to attend most of the DLA-organised events. However, they do not have the same obligations, for example for NERC administrative purposes, and are not required to complete the DLA training planner (see later).

Wellbeing and Support from the DLA

As a postgraduate student, you are part of a department, a DLA (if you are DLA-funded) and a college. Your department will have processes in place to provide a committee of advisors/friends, to check your progress, pay your stipend, etc. In some departments there may be extensive training requirements, in others less so, in which case you will rely more on the DLA. In many cases the cohort of departmental students may roam much wider than the NERC remit and provide you with a stimulating network in addition to that of the DLA. Finally, the department and its parent faculty will be responsible for arranging your exam and making sure you receive your degree! The department is primarily responsible for your progress – however if you have problems with training, research progress, supervision or any other aspects of your Ph.D. please do talk to us at the DLA as we may be able to offer alternative support, and we need to be aware of problems that might delay or even derail your studentship.

Your college may be your home and social centre. There will also be processes there to offer you pastoral support, and to advise you if you feel you need extra support or have difficulties within your department.

The DLA recruited you, will ensure you are being offered the variety of training you need, and will host cross-DLA events which will provide you with another network. The DLA is ultimately responsible to NERC for the funds supporting you, so we will occasionally have to ask you to come to obligatory events, to carry out admin tasks required by NERC, etc. We are happy to act as an additional source of help and advice if you are not getting what you need from your department. The DLA has a Welfare and Progress Lead, Dr. Alex Piotrowski, who is available to discuss any issues that may arise.

We hope that students and supervisors will find their activities funded by the DLA to be rewarding and enjoyable. However, if you are having problems and doubts, do come and talk to us. We may be able to help and we certainly need to know if your circumstances change. Your supervisor and department are the first port of call, but we are happy to act as a backstop for problems that persist, and for enquiries.

Useful contacts:

CREATES DLA Welfare and Progress Lead: Dr Alex Piotrowski, amp58@cam.ac.uk , or another member of our team.

Cambridge Disability Research Centre: disability@admin.cam.ac.uk

University Counselling Service: counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk, 01223 332865

University Careers Service

Training

Training is a crucial part of your Ph.D. experience. It can be considered in two parts: firstly, the training you need to execute your project and secondly the training that will enhance your suitability for whatever you do after your Ph.D. Because your studentship is immersed in an academic environment, it's easy to forget that many students, even if they go on to a postdoctoral position, will end up working outside academia, for example in industry, as entrepreneurs, or in other professions.

We therefore believe that you should leave the DLA with:

- Scientific training to enable you to be an independent scientist in your discipline
- An appreciation of a wider multidisciplinary area of research
- Personal and professional skills

Cambridge offers a huge range of training opportunities, and a main role of the DLA is to help you navigate and find what you need. Training will be available from:

- The DLA centrally
- Your department (and, where relevant, BAS)
- Your college
- The university through the central Researcher Development Programme and other providers like, for example, the University Computing Service or the Careers Service. The Researcher Development Programme's website (<http://www.rdp.cam.ac.uk/>) is a central port of call for links to other training providers in Cambridge, as well as providing information about their own courses and programmes.
- Outside providers, including other DLAs and NERC centres

Like other DLAs, we offer a wide range of generic training and some of this is delivered to the whole cohort at the start.

The way that we manage this is to:

- 1) Provide the DLA students with **customised training guidance**
- 2) Provide a range of **basic and specialised courses** that respond specifically to the CREATES DLA students' needs
- 3) Provide students with **information on courses** available within and outside Cambridge on a regular basis to make sure they don't miss opportunities

To help us provide students with customised training guidance, DLA students are asked to fill in a spreadsheet-based tool, developed from Vitae's Researcher Development Framework, but simplified and modified to suit students and particularly our students. Students are introduced to the training needs review during an initial induction at the very start of their time in Cambridge. Each student completes this spreadsheet, known as the training planner, in the first term and then updates it at the end of each academic year when they also have to complete a training log (according to departmental timetables). The planner takes around 30-60 minutes to complete and allows students to identify the areas where they lack skills or require training. The Training Facilitator (with help from the training committee) will assess each planner and, in the first term and at the end of the first year, will provide each student with personalised advice, pointing them at suitable courses to meet their identified needs, and assessing their progress so far. A lighter touch assessment of planners will be carried out in later years of each studentship.

The areas of skill and training covered by the planner are:

- Academic
- Ph.D.
- Research
- Professional
- Personal
- Career
- Enterprise

It is recommended that each student gains 20 "credits" each year (i.e. 60 in total) where a credit represents roughly half a day of training. Credits can be gained from courses, as well as from activities such as attending a conference and preparing a poster, although students are expected to gain a balance of credits across different areas of training and the nature of training activity will vary over the duration of the PhD.

The DLA also organises centrally a range of other events in response to needs identified year-on-year. From time to time, we have the chance to bid for funds for Innovation activities.

The CREATES training programme will comprise four components:

- (1) A two-day **induction** to introduce the DLA and the cohort.
- (2) The **Professional and Transferable Skills programme** will provide training that is explicitly targeted to meet the needs of environmental sciences, enabling our PhD students to leave academia with the skills they need in their future careers. This programme will take place fortnightly on Tuesdays throughout Michaelmas and Lent terms, in Earth Sciences (ES), unless otherwise stated. Times and rooms will be confirmed prior to each session. **All first-year CREATES DLA students are expected to attend.**
- (3) Our **Specialist Research Skills programme** where required, in areas such as advanced programming, modelling, data science, sample preparation and curation, will direct individual students to appropriate specialist courses in Cambridge and elsewhere, aiming to build upon their existing expertise by delivering targeted training.
- (4) Finally, all students will be given the opportunity to take **work placements** of up to three months in industry, government or the voluntary sector.

During term time, the DLA issues the whole DLA cohort with an e-Bulletin approximately once per term, together with short training updates outside term time. This lists a variety of training events and opportunities, starting with DLA events, then events in Cambridge and finally training available outside Cambridge.

There is a huge range of fascinating seminars in Cambridge every week, accessible through talks@cam (talks.cam.ac.uk). Students are strongly encouraged to sign up to receive alerts for interdisciplinary seminar series in Cambridge such as those of:

- Cambridge Centre for Climate Science (CCfCS)
- Conservation Research Institute (CCRI) – early career programme
- Earth Science and Bullard seminars
- Quaternary Discussion Group (QDG): late Thursday afternoon seminars during term
- Centre for Atmospheric Science seminars
- Many guest speakers at BAS (only a 15-minute cycle ride from other departments)

The CREATES DLA has formed an alliance with the ARIES DLA (centred at UEA in Norwich). The alliance is called CADA (CREATES ARIES Doctoral Alliance). We aim to share best practice, to organise occasional joint events, and for some events organised by CREATES to invite ARIES students and vice-versa. One particular event is an annual joint student symposium, scheduled to be held in March/April 2026.

Annual reporting

NERC requires all students (as also recipients of their grants) to enter data each year in its “Researchfish” database. The main things that need to be entered are publications and success stories. NERC will contact each student who needs to do this (1st years are exempted), and we (the DLA) will remind you. Please do this task. If there is nothing to report you **must** submit a NULL return, doing this is quick and easy. If you don’t do it, both you and the department could be penalised, and it could reflect badly on the DLA when we apply for renewal.

Each summer, we must complete an annual report. We try to do this mainly using your training logs, so please submit this on time. However, we are likely to mail you, asking you to tell us about success stories (such as papers you have published or major public engagement achievements). Please reply as it really helps to have these stories to hand, and we don’t have access to what you entered in Researchfish. You can find templates for training logs on the Moodle site.