

# **NERC CASE Studentships within the E4 DTP**

Official reference documents: [NERC Doctoral training partnership 2 (DTP2) Guidance Document](https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NERC-131221-DTP2GuidanceFAQs.pdf)

[NERC CASE Studentships webpage](https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/available/postgrad/focused/industrial-case/)

The E4 DTP

The Edinburgh Earth, Ecology and Environment Doctoral Training Partnership (E4 DTP), led by the School of GeoSciences at the University of Edinburgh, is funded by [NERC](https://nerc.ukri.org/) to **recruit and train 5 cohorts of PhD students annually between 2019 and 2024** (each cohort is of around 25 students). The E4 DTP brings together [32 local partners](https://www.ed.ac.uk/e4-dtp/partners) to provide a multidisciplinary, world class research and training centre and attract the most talented students to conduct frontier research in environmental sciences.

You can find out more on our website: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/e4-dtp> or by viewing this [21-minute video recording of the E4 DTP overview](https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Partner+Meetup+13+May+2021A+DTP+Presentation+by+Director+Richard+Essery/1_vnsn3x9c), made by Director Richard Essery, on 13 May 2021, during one of our Partner Meet-ups.

## CASE studentships background

CASE studentships (formerly known as 'Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering') provide doctoral students with **a first-rate, challenging research training experience within the context of a mutually beneficial research collaboration between academic and non-academic partner organisations,** which can be from the private, public and third/civil sectors. They provide access to training, facilities and expertise not available in an academic setting alone.

The CASE partners benefit from self-motivated, highly capable PhD students undertaking cutting-edge research relevant to their organisation's priorities and objectives. Both parties are also able to build and strengthen business and research collaborations**. CASE studentship projects must provide sound training in research methods, and a stimulating intellectual challenge for the student.** The work's impetus and initial requirement should originate from the CASE partner. **Both the research organisation and the CASE partner nominate supervisors responsible for overseeing the student's training.**

Impact is one of the CASE scheme's main criteria. **Studentships should demonstrate the potential for societal or economic impact through collaboration with the CASE partner and the provision of high quality training in research skills.**

## CASE partner eligibility

* **The CASE partner can be any non-academic organisation**, from the private, public and third/civil sectors, preferably based in the UK.
* **Any organisation eligible to receive NERC research funding will NOT be eligible** to act as a CASE partner. This includes [Research Council Institutes](https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/check-if-you-are-eligible-for-research-and-innovation-funding/eligible-research-institutes/#contents-list) (e.g. BGS, BAS, SAMS) and [Independent Research Organisations](https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/check-if-you-are-eligible-for-research-and-innovation-funding/eligible-independent-research-organisations/#contents-list)/IROs (e.g. BTO, HES, IOM, IIED, NMS, NOC, RBGE, RBGK, RSPB, The James Hutton Institute, CEH) as defined on the [UKRI website](https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/check-if-you-are-eligible-for-research-and-innovation-funding/).
* As an exception to the above, [Public Sector Research Establishments (PSREs)](https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/check-if-you-are-eligible-for-research-and-innovation-funding/eligible-public-sector-research-establishments/#contents-list) are eligible to act as CASE partners for NERC studentships (e.g. Forest Research, NPL, Met Office, SEPA, UK Space Agency)
* **International CASE partners are eligible** provided that they are a non-academic organisation, and that the DTP can evidence that the CASE criteria has been met and that the placement provides an opportunity for the student to gain skills that could not be provided by a UK-based partner. The student must be fully supported by the DTP and CASE partner throughout the placement period.

## CASE partner requirements

* **The CASE partner must supplement the studentship by a minimum of £1,000 p.a. for the lifetime of the studentship** (E4 DTP studentships are 3.5 years so **minimum contribution total is £3,500)**. This payment should be made to the lead Research Organisation (the University of Edinburgh School where the student is registered**) to supplement the student’s Research & Training Support Grant (RTSG)** and not paid directly to the student. Payment should follow the receipt of an annual invoice issued by the School, according to the invoicing schedule set out into the CASE studentship agreement, which will be signed within the first months of the programme.
* **The CASE partner must host the student for between three and eighteen months during their PhD,** during which time they will undertake work outside the academic environment. This placement does not need to occur in one single continuous period.
* **The CASE partner is expected to meet the extra expenses incurred by the student when visiting and working within their establishment (such as travel).** These can be refunded directly to the student as relevant.
* **The CASE partner is expected to contribute in cash or in kind towards necessary materials and/or facilities** not possessed by the Research Organisation concerned, that are required by the student to undertake research integral to their CASE studentship.

The E4 DTP provides the student with a stipend (minimum 3.5 years), standard research costs (total £3,450) and some additional research costs (maximum of £5,500, as required by the supervisor when submitting the project).

What are the benefits for a CASE partner?

“The mutual respect between academic supervisor and CASE partner provides a safe environment for creative discussions with the student” - *CASE Partner’s testimonial*

According to a DTP survey[[1]](#footnote-1), all of the surveyed CASE partners found the CASE experience very good with nearly a third saying it was beyond expectation. 85% would do it again.

When asked what they gained from the CASE studentship, CASE partners mainly mention access to high quality research and expertise which have brought new insights and analytical perspective, generated and addressed novel questions as well as raised the company’s research profile. They also enjoyed the research input such as contributions to collaborative papers.

## CASE studentships and the E4 DTP Recruitment Process

**The CASE partner needs to be associated with the creation of the PhD project from the start.** The submission of DTP projects usually has a deadline in mid-October, at which point, only the details of the CASE partner (name, supervisor, address) need to be known (these details should appear on the project proposal). Projects are reviewed and approved by a DTP committee before they are advertised early November. Applications deadline is early January.

If an applicant is shortlisted on the project by the E4 DTP Shortlisting panel (outcome known by early February), we will require to see **a formal letter of support from the CASE partner or, alternatively, the completed CASE support form** (see attached) before the applicant is interviewed (interviews take place at the end of February). Offers are sent between early March and late April.

The E4 DTP receives about 300 applications every year and has a **competitive selection process** with the appointment of about 18 Home students and 7 International students (due to the 30% cap imposed by NERC on international students appointments). **NERC also requires that 25% of the E4 DTP studentships be CASE** therefore we will always welcome and look favourably at CASE projects. For this reason, despite our aim to recruit the best students overall, regardless of their project, we might have to prioritise CASE projects at some point of the recruitment process. Even though, chances to get a student are still slim and it is possible that no student be appointed at all.

## Collaborative (non-CASE) Studentships

Partners who do not meet the requirements for CASE or who are not able/do not wish to commit to the formal CASE requirements are considered a **collaborative partner** and the studentship they will contribute to will be called a Collaborative Studentship. We do not need to see any formal proof of support for those studentships.

*If you have further questions on the CASE studentship scheme, please email the E4 DTP administrative team at e4dtp.info@ed.ac.uk.*



## **CASE support form for a NERC-funded E4 DTP studentship – 2023**

Official reference documents: [NERC Doctoral training partnership 2 (DTP2) Guidance Document](https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/available/postgrad/responsive/dtp/dtp2/dtp2-faq/)

[NERC CASE Studentships webpage](https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/available/postgrad/focused/industrial-case/)

CASE partners are required to supplement the DTP studentship, and thus enhance the research project, by:

1. Contributing to the studentship by a minimum of £1,000 p.a. for the lifetime of the studentship (E4 DTP studentships are 3.5 years so minimum contribution total is £3,500). This payment should be made to the lead Research Organisation (the University of Edinburgh School where the student is registered) to supplement the student’s Research & Training Support Grant (RTSG) and not paid directly to the student. Payment should follow the receipt of an annual invoice issued by the School, according to the invoicing schedule set out into the CASE studentship agreement which will be signed within the first months of the programme.
2. Hosting the student for between three and eighteen months during their PhD, during which time they will undertake work outside the academic environment. This placement does not need to occur in one single continuous period.
3. Meeting the extra expenses incurred by the student when visiting and working within their establishment (such as travel). These can be refunded directly to the student as relevant.
4. Contributing in cash or in kind towards necessary materials and/or facilities not possessed by the Research Organisation concerned that are required by the student to undertake research integral to their CASE studentship.

**If you are happy to confirm your support as a CASE partner, please complete and sign the below box and return to the E4 DTP Manager,** [e4dtp.support@ed.ac.uk](mailto:e4dtp.support@ed.ac.uk)**, by 29 February 2024:**

|  |
| --- |
| I, ------*name and role at the CASE partner institution--------------------------*, confirm that *-------name of the CASE partner and address-----------* will commit to the above CASE requirements to support the E4 DTP project *-------title of the project-------*  with lead supervisor ------name of the project’s first supervisor----- in the eventuality that a suitable candidate is appointed by the E4 DTP Recruitment Panel following interviews in February 2024.  Additional comments/support:  Date:  Signature:  Email: |

1. The survey was conducted in August 2020 and received 7 replies from CASE partners [↑](#footnote-ref-1)