

NERC Success Criteria for Responsive and Focused Postgraduate Training

Success Criteria (*priority criteria)		Brief Description
1	Research excellence*	The training and training environment must include scientifically excellent and original research within NERC's remit.
2	Training excellence*	Students are managed as a cohesive group and acquire both research and transferable skills. There is a strong and active community of students that are able – and encouraged – to integrate, work and learn together. Training organisations can meet success criteria 15 to 19.
3	Multidisciplinary training environments*	Training is embedded in multidisciplinary training environments to enrich the student experience and to encourage the knowledge-sharing and interconnectivity, which benefits research within the environmental sciences. This does not mean that individual PhD topics are required to be multidisciplinary.
4	Excellent students*	Attracting the right student. NERC funding goes to the right or 'best-fit' student: the individual whose previous training, experience and skills best suit the type of training being undertaken.
5	Quality assurance*	NERC is assured, ahead of allocation and delivery of training, that providers will deliver excellent training in line with the agreed success criteria, and that it will be possible to evaluate the outcomes of the training.
6	Value for money	Mechanisms used to allocate and deliver training are cost effective, for both NERC and the community.
7	Employability	Students' overall employability should be increased through the training undertaken.
8	Refreshing the research base	The stock and variety of highly skilled researchers and other R&D staff is replenished.
9	Skills for the environment sector	Students leave with skills for the environment sector: skills for policy-makers and regulators; industry and business; and NGOs and charities.
10	Produces success stories (demonstrates impact of investment)*	Training produces tangible outcomes (impacts in the broadest sense).
11	Ability to report and evaluate	There are clear mechanisms for the reporting and evaluation of training provision, from the start of the training grants to their end point and beyond.
12	Ability to support focused and responsive awards	While not necessarily part of the same mechanism, the overall portfolio is able to support both focused and responsive studentships.

13	Flexibility in funding (length and loading)	Training providers are able to consider the needs of individual students and to fund in different ways depending on that need. NERC funding provides that flexibility, provided training is completed on time, and depending on the training and the individual student (between three and four years for PhD students). Continuation of cross-council flexibility in matching studentship funding so that more students are supported than the number of studentships awarded (within guidelines).
14	Challenging and relevant projects	Research topics must be concerned with the scientific aspects of the natural environment and must fall broadly within NERC's remit, which includes interdisciplinary interfaces with other research councils. The research topic must be realistically challenging for the student: well defined, with 'researchable' questions or hypotheses to be developed and addressed; and offering genuine scope for high-level research and innovative science.
15	Students are well supported (personal/cultural)	Alongside training, there is student-centric support. This includes: ensuring students are recognised and valued as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of its overall strategy; the importance of the students' personal and career development is clearly recognised; and students share the responsibility for, and proactive engagement in, their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.
16	Students have timely access to appropriate infrastructure (equipment, services and facilities)	The organisation ensures that the students have timely access to the infrastructure they need to undertake their studies.
17	Generalist and specialist training needs of each student are identified and delivered	Training programmes must address the appropriate training needs of individual students, their research topics, and cover both subject-specific and transferable skills and knowledge.
18	Training is completed on time	Postgraduate training to be completed within agreed timescales - depending on the type of training and the individual student. This should be between three and four years for a PhD.