

Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs): Commissioning Framework



1. At its June 2016 meeting, the NERC Training Advisory Board (TAB) confirmed a new framework to inform NERC investment in CDTs. This framework was developed to ensure that all decision-making concerning NERC CDTs continues to be robust and evidence-based, informed by a broad range of evidence and clearly linked with the objectives of the CDT programme, as well as making more transparent the process by which evidence submissions are considered for CDT investment. This framework ensures community evidence submissions considered by TAB for CDT investment are complemented by appropriate information concerning relevant, existing training as well as broader strategic priorities.

CDT Programme Definition and Objectives

2. To ensure the framework is fit for purpose and supports appropriate decision-making, the following definition and objectives were agreed for the NERC CDT programme by TAB:

NERC supports CDT investment to provide focused investment into areas of priority to address training needs within the NERC remit. CDTs are supported with the intention of developing a legacy of training excellence from an initial, directed NERC investment.

Following the initial NERC investment, it is expected that NERC CDTs either:

- a) *become self-sufficient through investment from other sources, such as NERC DTP funding or industrial investment,*
- b) *submit a new evidence submission to NERC detailing how their remit remains or re-focusses an existing training priority for consideration for CDT investment, or*
- c) *cease following the completion of the final studentship.*

CDT Commissioning Framework Key Features

3. Included below is a summary of the CDT Commissioning Framework. The timetable of the Commissioning Framework decision-making process is available within **Annex A** and the timetable of future evidence gathering exercises for areas of training priority is available in **Annex B**.
 - i. The NERC community submits Evidence of Training Priority through a Request for Evidence or as extraordinary submissions at any time.
 - ii. At its June meeting, TAB agrees a shortlist of areas of priority for CDT investment from these evidence submissions, to be discussed in detail at its December meeting.
 - iii. NERC collects supplementary information including existing training investment and feedback from other NERC advisory groups and boards for each shortlisted area of training priority.
 - iv. At its December meeting, TAB discusses the shortlisted topics complemented by appropriate evidence and advises NERC on the areas of priority for CDT investment.
 - v. NERC prepares a CDT call(s) taking into account this advice.
 - vi. Stages ii.-v. are repeated annually until TAB advises NERC to hold a new Request for Evidence in order to refresh the information available to inform their discussions. Requests for Evidence will take place every 3-5 years.
4. This process was introduced to inform decision-making at the December 2016 TAB meeting and resulted in the 2017 call for a new CDT to start in 2018/19. It is now used to inform decision-making on an ongoing basis.

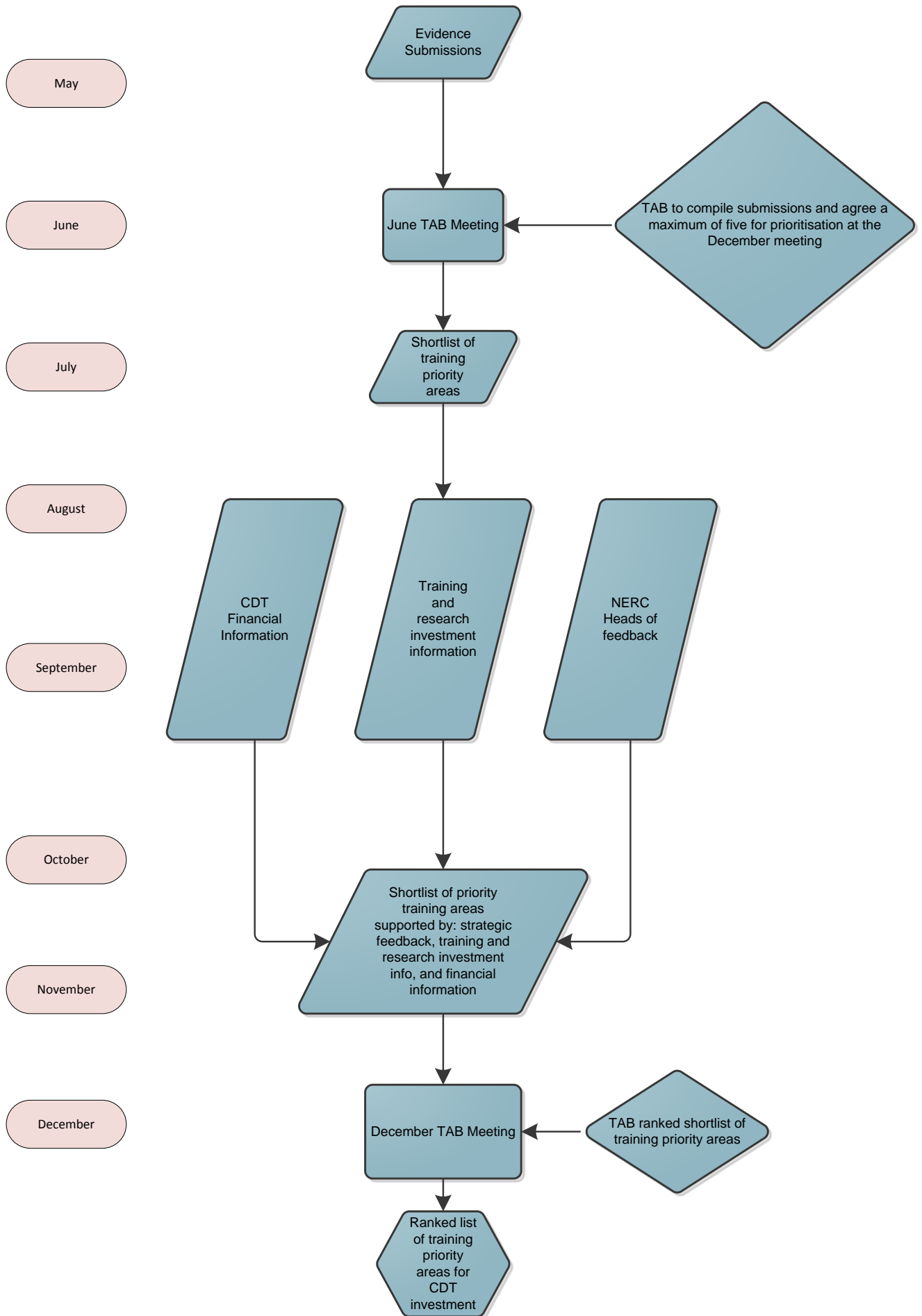
Existing NERC CDTs

5. NERC invests in CDTs to provide investment into areas of training priority with the intention that this initial investment provides a legacy of training excellence. Following the initial NERC CDT funding, no

additional NERC CDT funding will be provided to an existing award. Existing CDTs are expected to either become self-sufficient through securing alternative funding, such as industry or other NERC funding sources, or cease following the completion of their final studentship.

6. Existing NERC CDTs may submit evidence for consideration for new CDT investment relevant to their current training remit. This evidence is submitted in the same format as other evidence submissions and must demonstrate to NERC how the CDT remit remains a training priority or re-focusses an existing training priority for consideration for CDT investment. Resubmissions of topics already funded should only be made if there remains a demonstrable training need in that area, and not as a means of securing additional funding for an existing award.
7. Should TAB recommend that new CDT investment be made into an area with an existing CDT, this funding will be awarded by open competition and will not automatically be used to extend the existing CDT.
8. If you consider that the area of training priority in which a CDT was funded remains a high priority for investment, taking into account current CDT investment and the stated objectives of the CDT programme, you may submit an Evidence of Training Priority form for consideration by TAB for shortlisting and further CDT investment. Further information concerning submitting [Evidence of Training Priority](#) is available.
9. If an evidence submission for a previously funded training priority submission is shortlisted for further discussion, relevant complementary data and strategic input will be prepared by NERC staff to ensure TAB discussions are appropriately informed. Shortlisted evidence submissions that are not recommended for investment will remain within the existing pool to be considered by TAB at its next shortlisting meeting and will be retained until the next Request for Evidence.

Annex A: Timetable of 2016/17 CDT Commissioning Framework evidence gathering and decision-making



Annex B: Timetable of CDT Commissioning inc. Requests for Evidence for 2016 onwards

Date	Stage	Notes
2013	First NERC CDT in Oil & Gas awarded	2014/15 CDT start
2013	December TAB CDT topic prioritisation for 2015/16 CDT start	CDT topics recommended in “Soil Science” and “Risk and Mitigation; using Big Data”.
2014	First CDT Request for Evidence	First request for community evidence submissions identifying areas of training priority relevant to NERC remit
2014	December TAB CDT topic prioritisation for 2016/17 NERC CDT start	First prioritisation of evidence submissions – CDT topic recommended in “The use of smart and autonomous observation for the environmental sciences”
2015	December TAB CDT topic prioritisation for 2017/18 NERC CDT start	Second prioritisation of evidence submissions – CDT topic recommended in “Modelling and quantitative skills in ecology and evolution”
2016	December TAB CDT topic prioritisation for 2018/19 NERC CDT start	Third prioritisation of evidence submissions – CDT topics recommended in “Freshwater bioscience and sustainability” or “Environmental science underpinning the sustainable future of the energy sector”. Remaining evidence submissions thought to be of insufficient quality for investment – second Request for Evidence to be held 2017.
2017	Second CDT Request for Evidence	Second request for community evidence submissions identifying areas of training priority relevant to NERC remit
2017	December TAB CDT topic prioritisation for 2019/20 NERC CDT start	First prioritisation of evidence submissions received through the second Request for Evidence.
2018	December TAB CDT topic prioritisation for 2020/21 NERC CDT start	Second prioritisation of evidence submissions
2019	December TAB CDT topic prioritisation for 2021/22 NERC CDT start	Third prioritisation of evidence submissions. If remaining evidence submissions are considered by TAB to be of insufficient quality for investment – third Request for Evidence to be held 2020.
Repeat Ongoing		