

SUPER-NERC RESEARCH EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS (REP)

SUPER has been awarded five Research Experience Placements (REPs) for completion in summer 2021.

The REP scheme recognises that there is a shortage of individuals with quantitative skills coming into environmental science, and new for 2021, also recognises demographic and diversity-related challenges in the environmental sciences.

NERC are keen for SUPER members to focus on applications from student groups that are typically underrepresented within the Higher Education pathways. These could include (but not limited to) students from ethnic minorities, those with a disability or from low-income backgrounds. Addressing underrepresentation is an area of particular focus for NERC, but SUPER has flexibility within our REP allocation to decide the balance of focus on skills gaps or demographic underrepresentation.

The REP scheme will focus on these quantitative skills gaps and underrepresentation by offering funding to support paid summer placements for undergraduate students, during which they will carry out research projects within the scope of the environmental sciences. These placements are intended to encourage students to consider a career in this field, and undergraduates from any science discipline are eligible.

SUPER would now like to invite applications from its membership for these REPs. This competitive process is open to all PIs in research organisation training partners within our partnership.

Please see below for further guidance and important details regarding student eligibility, project requirements and responsibilities.

Application process

Supervisors from across the SUPER DTP partnership should submit their proposals electronically to superdtp@st-andrews.ac.uk using the Supervisor Proforma. Projects will be accepted up until **12 noon Wednesday, 05 May 2021**.

Projects will be verified for their suitability and assessed on the quality of the REP project and the training experience on offer. This assessment will be carried out by a SUPER DTP REP assessment panel.

Supervisors will be notified of proposal acceptance by Friday, 14 May 2021, with projects advertised on the SUPER DTP website as soon as approved. Supervisors will be expected to maximise the advertising of REP opportunities within their own institutions, and deal directly with student applications. Supervisors should notify superdtp@st-andrews.ac.uk as soon as a student has been chosen for their project.

Further Guidance

Funding

NERC will provide funding to SUPER to support 5 notional REP placements of up to £3,200 (including £500 research costs). Funding can be used flexibly to support placements of variable length (minimum of 6 weeks) as long the full cost of each REP is covered.

As an example, funds awarded could be used to cover 5, 8-week, full-time placements at national minimum wage for a 23-year-old, (see table 1 below). If funds are used for students in a different age category and/or for a different length of time, any funding left could be repurposed to support additional REPs and/or cohort activities/development opportunities for REP students.

Table 1 UK national minimum wage across age-groups (as of April 2021)

Length of REP	18 – 20 years old	21 – 22 years old	23+
6 weeks	£1,456.32	£1,855.92	£1,978.02
8 weeks	£1,941.76	£2,474.56	£2,637.36
10 weeks	£2,427.20	£3,093.20	£3,296.7

This table is based on 2021 National minimum wage; NERC will provide £3200 per REP including £500 for research costs

REP funding payment will be released by NERC on receipt of all final reports by adding the funds to the SUPER Doctoral Training Grant. SUPER will then be responsible for disseminating funds to hosting partners as appropriate.

Eligibility

Eligibility of participating undergraduate students:

Students are subject to eligibility criteria to be able to apply for NERC REPs and must:

- Be undertaking their first undergraduate degree studies (or integrated Masters).
- Be applying for a placement in a different department to their undergraduate degree
- Be eligible for subsequent NERC PhD funding (Details of eligibility for PhD studentships can be found [here](#)).

Research project criteria

Proposed REPs student projects are also subject to suitability criteria. Proposed projects must:

- Have a clearly defined objective.
- Be within the science remit of NERC.
- Be feasible for a student to complete within the timescale of the award.
- Include more than purely a computer/modelling component i.e. some element of fieldwork, data collection, activity to give an understanding of the wider context etc*
- Give scope for thought and initiative on the part of the student and should not use the student as a general assistant.
- Be based at an eligible UK research organisation.

** We understand that there will need to be some flexibility due to COVID19, therefore applications need to show evidence that they have also considered a contingency plan so that the placement can still go ahead. If the placement needs to change, we require evidence that the student will still be integrated into their department. For example, if a placement becomes computer-based, students are still invited to lab meetings and other sessions.*

Responsibilities of SUPER

SUPER is responsible for administering REPs hosted within our partnership. Specific responsibilities include:

- Coordinating the REPs award process across the SUPER partners and advertising across all relevant partners.
- Ensuring that opportunities are published and advertised to all relevant groups and recruitment policies are followed.
- Collating all REPs reporting forms from hosting organisations.
- Disseminating REPs funds to host organisations as appropriate following payment from NERC.

Responsibilities of the host organisation

The host organisation is responsible for:

- Selecting a suitable undergraduate student and ensuring eligibility (see student eligibility requirements above) and confirming their eligibility using the UKRI criteria listed under 'eligibility' above.
- Ensuring the REPs project falls within the NERC remit and is of suitable quality.
- Ensuring that appropriate supervisory arrangements are in place.
- **Ensure each student has a PhD student mentor from the DTP/CDT. SUPER can help with this if you don't have a SUPER student.**
- Ensuring that any necessary ethical committee approvals, animal licences and requirements of regulatory authorities are in place before the work begins and are maintained during the duration of the work.
- The identification, protection and exploitation of any intellectual property rights arising from the work.
- Ensuring that all facilities, agreements about access and collaborations necessary for the work are obtained before the work commences and can be ensured through the period of the work.
- Ensuring that all costs awarded by NERC for the REPs are used and accounted for appropriately.
- Ensuring that details and assessment of the project are reported to NERC (via SUPER), as directed.
- **Ensuring that a PhD interview (where appropriate) is offered to all students who completed REPs within SUPER.**

Reporting

The student and project supervisor at the hosting organisation will be required to complete a brief report on the outcome of the placement. Reporting forms for both students and supervisors will be sent, by NERC, later this year.

EDI reporting

Please be aware that NERC will be asking you to report on all recruitment stages as part of their commitment to EDI. Further details on this will follow, but we will be asking for information on all initial applicants, interview candidates and successful/unsuccessful students.