# Assessment Criteria for NERC Associated Studentships

The moderating or assessment panel for the relevant Funding Opportunity will assess the appropriateness of the proposed studentship project. To ensure that associated studentships meet NERC and UKRI training expectations, all associated studentship applications will be assessed under the following NERC success criteria:

- training excellence
- multidisciplinary training environment
- recruiting and nurturing talent

These criteria will be assessed by members of the NERC talent and skills team. The full assessment criteria are shown below.

| Assessment Criteria | Key aspects for an Excellent Associated Studentship proposal | Evidence that might be discussed* |
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| 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. | Students are part of an active research and training community.<br><br>Excellent scientific training and transferable/ professional skills development opportunities.<br><br>Challenging and relevant, but feasible, project(s).<br><br>Timely access to world- class facilities, direct experience of cutting- edge techniques, technologies, and up-to- date methodologies.<br><br>Excellent training and support for supervisors.<br><br>Well-considered mechanism for managing and monitoring training. | Students have access to, and are encouraged, by peer-to-peer learning and support.<br><br>Integration of students into teams/projects/departments/school.<br><br>How generalist and specialist development needs of individual students will be identified and addressed.<br><br>The personal/ professional/ career learning and development that students will receive.<br><br>The collaborative opportunities, which may include internships, industrial placements, overseas studies, and co-supervisory arrangements.<br><br>Mechanisms to ensure the development of independent researchers and world-leading scientists.<br><br>Employability of graduates. |

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| | | Completion rates, publication and first destination data for students hosted within the institution.<br><br>Mechanisms for supervision and monitoring of both student and supervisor.<br><br>Robust quality-assurance procedures and structures which enable delivery of excellent training in line with the success criteria and the outcomes can be evaluated.<br><br>Arrangements in place for management of data generated by studentship projects.<br><br>Processes for induction, progression, monitoring and submission. |
| 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. | Training embedded in multidisciplinary research environments.<br><br>Excellent opportunities to network with researchers and students from other disciplines.<br><br>Excellent opportunities for collaborative projects involving end-user partners, including CASE studentships, internships/placements, and end-user co-supervision, where appropriate. | How students will be made aware of the context of their research and how it relates to other disciplines, and its application outside of academia.<br><br>Supervisory or wider advisory team engagement in research outside the relevant discipline(s).<br><br>Ability to expose students to different disciplines via, for example:<br>• Interaction with students from different disciplines through transferrable skills training, seminars/conferences, and networking opportunities<br>• Placing students within multidisciplinary research teams<br>• Opportunities to attend specialist training courses in other disciplines where appropriate. |

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| Recruiting and nurturing talent – 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. Support for the most talented students whatever their background and regardless of where and when they undertook their first degree. | Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) principles embedded at all levels and all aspects of research and training practice.<br><br>Strategic and systematic approaches to attracting and selecting best-fit students. Student recruitment is designed to enable wide participation and prioritizes potential for excellence in studentship outcomes i.e., what an individual can bring to a project and the graduate they will be as a result of the training they have received).<br><br>Robust mechanisms to promote postgraduate research to a diverse base of talented graduate students across the UK, with all studentships offered on a full- or part-time basis through an open and transparent selection process. Studentships and associated processes are sufficiently flexible to enable them to be tailored to individual needs. | Demonstration of a strategy for embedding DEI principles in all aspects of the studentship(s).<br><br>Mechanisms for recruiting the best-fit students.<br><br>Evidence of support available to all students to protect their physical and mental health and wellbeing. |

*Please note, the types of evidence shown within the table are provided as examples and applicants should develop their proposals in whatever way they feel most appropriate to address the assessment criteria. They are included to provide guidance as to the kind of activities and processes that would help to meet the requirements of the relevant criterion. The assessment panel will use the evidence within the table as a guide when assessing proposals but will not expect all proposals to include all types of evidence listed within this table, nor will they ignore additional evidence of excellence or innovative approaches.