



*Scottish Alliance for Geoscience, Environment and Society*



# SAGES Innovation Programme 2018 – 2019

IMPACT REPORT | June 2019



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH



# Foreword

**The 2019 SAGES Innovation Programme report highlights our activity in the innovation space over the last year 18-19.**

Once again we are indebted to the team at ECCI for hosting and facilitating these activities. Increasingly the interface between academia industry and policy makers is becoming busy and the workshops, training and placements offered by this programme are valuable tools in helping to prepare our students for life after completing their research.



The variety of opportunities offered is a reflection of the changing landscape as we aim to face Brexit and increasing globalisation whilst trying to forge new ways of living sustainably and developing a low carbon economy. The future is exciting and preparing for this is real challenge. Our programme would not be the success it is without the help of the team at ECCI and this year has seen a number of changes notably the departures of Charlotte Waugh and Katherine Maxwell who will be greatly missed, but thank you both. We wish you both fair winds and smooth seas as you turn to new horizons.

**Dr John Howe**, SAGES Graduate School Convenor

## Results

**700+**

**Businesses made aware of the SAGES Programme**



**15**

**attendees at workshops and events**



**19**

**organisations interested in working with SAGES students**



**5**

**industry engagement events delivered**



**5**

**students completed a placement**



**15**

**students and lecturers attended workshop on delivering research for Government policy**



# Introduction

ECCL has built upon the success of previous SAGES Innovation Programmes by delivering another exciting career development opportunity for SAGES students for 2018-2019. The programme links students with relevant host organisations and is at the forefront of bringing academia and business together to tackle global environmental challenges. This report outlines the impact of the SAGES Innovation Programme.

## Aims of the SAGES Innovation Programme

- **Student placements:** A range of business, third and public sector organisations working in priority areas of interest for SAGES were matched with PhD students to work together on meaningful consultancy projects.
- **Impact and innovation skills training workshops:** A series of engaging and practical workshops were developed to enable SAGES students to foster the skills required to successfully network, engage with and work out-with academia.
- **Travel Impact Awards:** An award to encourage SAGES students to attend a conference relevant to their studies where they could demonstrate engagement with business, third and public sector organisations.

## Programme design

### Student placements

#### November 2018 – May 2019

Fifteen organisations showed interest in hosting a SAGES student placement within their organisation. The 2018/2019 SAGES Innovation Programme linked innovative, sustainable businesses, Climate-KIC entrepreneurs on the Climate-KIC Accelerator Programme and climate change policy experts ClimateXChange with five SAGES students. Each host organisations offered impactful work placement opportunities undertaking research on projects. ECCL matched the areas of expertise of each SAGES student as closely as possible to a particular host organisation to ensure the experience was relevant for each student and could add value for the host organisation.

### Workshops

#### November 2018 – May 2019

Five skills training modules were delivered to provide SAGES students the opportunity to boost their professional confidence, develop entrepreneurship skills, communicate their academic research to policy-makers and industry, and, grow their industry-relevant skillsets. The workshops focused on 'industry and innovation' to familiarise SAGES students with the innovation opportunities within the UK environmental sector, as well as professional development workshops geared towards CV building and how to involve themselves in sectors outside of academia.

## Travel Impact Award

As part of the SAGES Innovation Programme, participating SAGES students had the option to apply for a 'Travel Impact Award' that would provide funds to attend an environmental focused conference of their choice in the UK. The award was specifically for conferences that offered:

- Knowledge exchange between academics and policy-makers
- How to create impact from academic research
- Engaging with end users (e.g., businesses; policy-makers)

The Travel Impact Award was developed to enable SAGES students to engage with business, third and public sector organisations. This opportunity gave SAGES students a better idea as to how their academic research could create a positive impact in non-academic sectors. The award provided £250 to cover travel to and from conferences as well as basic accommodation.



This event was particularly useful for me regarding my research... the seminar has given me indicators where and when to apply my research to achieve greatest impact."



The networking opportunities that the conference provided allowed me to speak to civil servants and Government officials about my work and a representative from Bloomberg who was interested in the area of research. During the second half on the seminar I was seated next to Dr Phil Renforth (Herriot-Watt University) who is one of the pioneers of the recent research. Thank you very much to SAGES for funding my attendance to this seminar series. It was extremely insightful for my current and future academic/career endeavours, and it was also a great experience to attend an event in Whitehall with such a diverse and relevant demographic in attendance."

## Impact

### Student placements

SAGES students were surveyed at the start of the programme and ECCI matched them with a relevant host organisation. All SAGES students who applied for a placement were offered a host organisation and consultancy project, however, due to course related commitments, not all students could take up their placement.

### Student and Organisation: Matching up

Student Name	Organisation	Project	Placement Length
Charlie Bunce	Trade In Space	Developer – production of classification tools for coffee identification from satellite imagery	Feb – May 2019
Christopher Holdsworth	ClimateXChange	Researcher – analysis of Scottish PWS vulnerability during heatwave	Jan – Mar 2019
Rachel Oien	ClimateXChange	Researcher – practical potential for natural flood management approaches	Jan – May 2019
Marja van den Houten	One Cherry	Analyst – business development, diversification and performance	Feb – May 2019
Elena Sesana	Comrie Croft	Researcher – sustainability assessment to monitor energy consumption and CO <sub>2</sub> output	Dec – Jan 2019

## Feedback from students

Upon completing their individual placements, 4 out of the 5 students would be interested in pursuing future placements having acknowledged the skills gained from them.

**100% considered the placements useful to their future career prospects.**

“

[The placement provided] great connections and skills, [and] exposure to industry partners.”

“

[The placements] provide real-life job opportunities outside the realm of academic research at universities.”

“

It takes you out of your PhD niche for a brief spell, refreshing or inspiring some new ideas. The hot desk facility at ECCI allowed me to network...”



## Feedback from businesses

“

“[The student] had extensive previous experience and network in the carbon sector. She was very useful in helping us to identify stakeholders that could potentially help us.”

“

“[The student] surpassed all our expectations, coming up with a system for sustainability monitoring that is practical and designed around our business. We are really looking forward to analysing the results!”

“

In addition to excellent business analysis, our intern was able to bring new contacts and knowledge that otherwise would be inaccessible to us.”

“

I do not think it would have been possible for us to complete this work in a timescale that would have satisfied our customer [without the placement], and therefore we would have lost an extremely valuable commercial opportunity.”



## Workshops

Five workshops were delivered by ECCI as part of the programme, focusing on specific knowledge requirements and skills development that would maximise the student's ability to engage with business, communicate their research to non-academics and to fortify their career development skillset.

Workshop	Dates
Making Your Research Matter (ClimateXChange)	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2018
Industry Meet 'n' Greet: Dragons' Den & Christmas Social	6 <sup>th</sup> December 2018
Innovation & Business Skills Training	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Impactful & Effective CVs: How to communicate your academic skills to business & policy audiences	7 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
ECCI Spring Social & Workshop: 'How to build your professional brand on LinkedIn'	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2019

### Making Your Research Matter workshop

The workshop had 15 attendees, all of whom agreed that: it met or exceeded their expectations, their public sector engagement knowledge increased, and that it was an overall positive experience delivered by a high-quality and experienced trainer.

#### Workshop Attendees



**The workshop gave me a better insight into policy processes and the way to about making research relevant to policy. I now will think more about summarising my work in a policy context."**



**Yes, the exercises given were useful to reinforce slides and ideas presented. Practical ideas supplied that I can apply myself."**



**...Great to have more insight into how your research can be slotted into the world outside of academia."**



**The course touched upon many points I had not previously considered which I will bear in mind in the future, so overall it was positive. The course could include comments from other PhD students who had the chance to interact with end users and the difficulties they faced, etc."**





## Conclusion

The SAGES Innovation Programme was successfully delivered by ECCI, building upon the achievements of previous programmes. The programme received overwhelmingly positive feedback from its participants (both the workshops and the placements) as well as from the host organisations. Students were made aware of the benefits of engaging with the private, third and public sector organisations, and overall acknowledged how such engagement skills contributed positively towards their future career development.

The programme has developed and built on the feedback from previous years, reaching out to a greater number of host organisations and increasing the number of interested SAGES students. ECCI's growing network within Scotland's low-carbon ecosystem continues to drive demand and interest in the opportunities to be found at the nexus between academia, business and policy.

