



ECCI Innovation Programme

IMPACT REPORT | June 2019



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



Foreword from the E3 DTP Deputy Director

A high priority for our Doctoral Training Partnership is that our students should develop an understanding of the importance of environmental science research to society and how the outcomes of research can be communicated to a broad range of audiences.

We also seek to enable them to develop transferable skills that will be useful to them both in their current research and in their future careers, and to explore employment opportunities in diverse sectors.

The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation is an essential partner for us to meet these goals. ECCI has the links with private, third and public sector organisations that allow our students to identify and take advantage of placement opportunities. We know from the feedback that we receive that these opportunities are highly valued by both students and host organisations. The “Making Your Research Matter” workshop delivered by ECCI and ClimateXChange has also been very well received.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with ECCI as the E3 DTP draws to a close and the E4 DTP builds up over the next few years.

Professor Richard Essery

E3 DTP Deputy Director
School of GeoSciences
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Introduction

The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI) once again successfully delivered the ECCI Innovation Programme for NERC funded PhD students, for the fourth consecutive year running from November 2018 until May 2019.

Overall, we:

Enabled business and policy engagement

Matched students with businesses, organisations and Government policy specialists in NERC priority areas through meaningful internships.

Boosted impact and innovation skills

Helped staff and students understand UK innovation systems and delivered skills and industry workshops to help students engage effectively with the non-academic sector.

Deepened sector knowledge to support impact and end user experience

Provided support to help students understand the wider cross-sectoral issues in NERC priority areas, as well as research and career-related opportunities.

Results

700+

Businesses made aware of the ECCI Innovation Programme



15

attendees at workshops and events



19

organisations interested in working with NERC students



5

industry engagement events delivered



5

students completed a placement



15

students and lecturers attended workshop on delivering research for Government policy



NERC Innovation Programme – a closer look

Student placements

What we did

The main objective of the programme was to link up NERC PhD students with private, third and public sector organisations to host student placements, which would provide career development opportunities. The student placements were developed to bridge the gap between academia and the private sector. For example, ECCI linked NERC PhD students with low-carbon start-ups and SMEs participating on Climate-KIC Accelerator programme. In addition, students were matched with ClimateXChange – Scotland’s centre for climate change policy expertise.

Seventeen host organisations expressed interest in the programme with the intent of providing opportunities for student placements. The academic interests and specific skills of each student was matched with the most relevant host organisations and end users who demonstrated a clear need for research projects.

Every NERC PhD student on the programme was offered a relevant placement that aligned with their specific areas of research, however due to the commitments of each individual student, not all could ultimately participate in the placement offered.

Student Name	Organisation Name	Project	Placement Length
Ka Long Au	Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh	Researcher – threats to tropical forest and carbon/biodiversity loss through deforestation	Feb - April 2019
Annemiek Waajen	ClimateXChange	Researcher – land-use in vulnerable areas of water scarcity	Jan – March 2019
Dylan Price	Indinature	Product developer – low carbon biotech materials for construction industry	Dec - March 2019
Blair Mackie	ClimateXChange	Researcher – resilient infrastructure for flood risk management	Jan – March 2019
Monika Mendelova	Low Carbon College/ECCI	Researcher – strategic synergies between ECCI and LCC	April – May 2019

Impact

Feedback from students

100% of students who underwent an internship found it useful for future career prospects.



““

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

““

[Learned] lab work skills, learnt about a whole new industry and about startups in general.”

Feedback from businesses

““

“[The student brought] understanding of climate data... [without them] it is possible that the work would not have been completed.”

““

[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.”

““

We are lean start-up which is carrying out rapid R&D on novel products – our friendly and enthusiastic NERC intern was a godsend: he was able to work on his own to lead on the project in the lab and gave us a very clear report on the experimental results. A huge help, thank you.”



Skills and Training Workshops

What we did

ECCI delivered five targeted skills and training workshops for the NERC PhD students.

A survey with NERC PhD students identified an interest in learning how to communicate research to audiences outside of academia, with over 70% of students wanting to improve this skill.

As a result, the workshops were tailored to deliver the following outcomes for students:

- How to communication PhD research to audiences out-with academia, such as public sector organisations
- Innovation support and business skills: How to communicate your research to private sector organisations
- Career development and targeted CV maximisation to appeal directly to non-academic audiences

Workshop	Date
Making Your Research Matter (ClimateXChange)	28 th Nov 2018
Industry Meet ‘n’ Greet: Dragons’ Den & Christmas Social	6 th Dec 2018
Innovation & Business Skills Training	13 th Feb 2019
Impactful & Effective CVs: How to communicate your academic skills to business & policy audiences	7 th March 2019
ECCI Spring Social & Workshop: ‘How to build your professional brand on LinkedIn’	22 nd May 2019

Travel Impact Award

What we did

Travel Impact Award was offered to a student on the ECCI Innovation Programme to attend relevant conferences and events for research and networking purposes. ECCI offered the successful applicant £250 award to cover travel and accommodation, with the aim that this would allow them to ultimately engage more effectively with policy-makers and industry, and learn more about how their research could make positive impacts outside of academia.

Impact

The travel award was awarded to one student on the NERC-funded Innovation Programme, who used it to attend a Glacial Retreat workshop in Lima, Peru. Thee student found it to be extremely beneficial, with direct impact on the outcomes of the programme:



Attending this meeting gave me the opportunity to learn about the policy-making and impact-mitigation measures which will be implemented using the research outputs of the programme. Furthermore, the meeting facilitated discussions with a local wetland users group about artificial wetlands which are being designed and constructed in the Ancash region, with the aim of naturally filtering out the metal-rich sulphides which are being released into local rivers due to glacial retreat.

Overall, attending the workshop has helped me to understand more about the process by which research can be integrated into policy-making and has strengthened my enthusiasm to get more involved in policy-making in the future.”

Snapshot: Making Your Research Matter Workshop (ClimateXChange)

In conjunction with ECCI, Scotland's centre for expertise on climate ClimateXChange delivered a workshop designed to provide insight for NERC students on how to collaborate with the public sector. The workshop had 15 attendees and explored multiple areas of co-operation including presenting to non-academic audiences, knowledge exchange between sectors and the relationship between funding and impact.

When surveyed, all NERC students agreed that it met or exceeded their expectations, was a positive experience with high-quality workshop delivery, and, that their policy engagement knowledge had been increased by attending.

Feedback from workshop attendees included:



It has helped to 'de-mystify' the world of policy, and given me ideas as to how I can make my work more accessible."



I've had sporadic training in policy briefs in the past and this session gave a really useful insight as well as providing ample good advice."



Much clearer idea of how to interact with people involved in policy."



Good preview of how research can be communicated to policymakers."

Conclusion

ECCI has built upon the success of previous years and delivered another successful ECCI Innovation Programme for NERC funded PhD students. The overwhelming majority of feedback from host organisations was positive as well as from the student participants, who praised workshop content and placement opportunities. Students were quick to outline the positives gained from developing policy and industry engagement skills, and how this was directly beneficial towards their individual career development.

Not only has the ECCI Innovation Programme seen an increase in the number of students participants from last year, the programme has also reached out to a greater number of private, third and public sector organisations.

Want to know more?
edinburghcentre.org