



## NERC Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in Oil & Gas

### Training Academy Committee, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2018, Heriot-Watt University

**Present:** Andy Aplin (Chair), Andy Bell, Anna Clark, Mads Huuse (via telecom until end item 5), Lorna Morrow, John Underhill

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

JU opened the meeting with an HSE briefing and apologies were noted from Anna Korre, Ole Martinsen and Zoe Shipton. AA welcomed committee members to the meeting.

#### 2. Review of notes from previous meeting, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017

#### 3. Review of previous year's course provision and student feedback (August 2017 – July 2018)

Members reviewed the cohort feedback documents circulated by email on 13/08/18. AC reported as follows:-

- a. 4<sup>th</sup> year Careers workshop which had run for the first time in April 2018 had been an enjoyable experience overall, student feedback indicated that the format had not been viewed as particularly helpful or suitable for this stage in the students' writing-up period so a new format would be considered for 2019.
- b. Planning to re-locate the Decarbonisation course from New Lanark to Glasgow as feedback indicates the location is difficult to access and remote from shops etc.
- c. Different tutor team for Business Skills course in November 2017 which was not as successful. Anna will try to get the team led by Mark Bentley again for November 2018.
- d. AGR Tracs' training diary is filling up again so Mark Cook is looking for an increase in the day rate charged to the CDT, or to offer fewer courses. Anna is discussing this with Mark Bentley.
- e. The combined Commercial Geoscience Tenby field trip and classroom Petroleum Economics course went well but was tiring. Due to a number of students being unable to attend with their cohort, the numbers for 2019 are too large for a single course so there will be two courses run simultaneously.
- f. Alps field trip was well received
- g. Students requested that the Induction talks be more general. JU suggested including shale gas in the Midland Valley.
- h. The November 2017 EIR course had been split between Heriot-Watt, The Underwater Centre at Fort William and Aberdeen. This had allowed students to view a range of sites but it was tiring. Students want to see more infrastructure and JU suggested the Spirit Energy/Centrica gas pipeline at Barrow-on-Furness.
- i. Petroleum Systems Analysis had been very well received as always.

- j. Mature Basins course had been given a disappointing review by students who felt that the field trip and talks directly related to Mature Basins were good, but that there wasn't enough of this and too much time was spent asking students to talk about their own projects. Mads was asked to discuss with colleagues at Manchester if the classroom element could be re-vamped. It was suggested that as the 2018 entry cohort is likely to be smaller than previous cohorts, it would be possible to open up the mandatory courses to non-CDT students at partner universities at marginal cost and that this might induce staff to collaborate on updating the course offerings.
- k. AC noted that as HoD, he no longer has the time to commit to the Unconventionals course and Durham has also lost the other main contributor to the course so Durham's future provision is in doubt. It might be possible to buy in time from the spin-off company run by Ken McCaffrey and Bob Holdsworth.

**Action:** AC to follow up with JU on suggested contacts for infrastructure site visits.

#### **4. Future of the CDT**

JU reported on NERC budget cuts and that there would be no CDT call for the coming year. Only one CDT had been awarded last year in Terrestrial Ecology and NERC has withdrawn its Industrial CASE awards scheme. The CDT was awarded 10 out of a total of 84 NPIF studentships made available to NERC for the 2017 cohort, and had been allocated 2 out of 24 NPIF studentships for the 2018 cohort. There is very little chance of additional NPIF money being made available via BEIS. The DTP2 call is ongoing and successful bidders are expected to be announced in November 2018. Even if successful in the DTP2 round, it is unlikely that any existing Oil & Gas CDT partners who were not in the bid which seeks to translate the CDT model to the DTP2 scheme would be able to join as it is unlikely the number of studentships awarded will be sufficient to accommodate any increase in partner numbers. Industry continue to be willing to support the Oil & Gas CDT model so it may become a self-sustaining sector scheme. JU indicated he would be approaching the Scottish Government for funding. Given the expected timing of the DTP2 winners, it was agreed that CDT governance committee meetings, including the Industry Advisory Board, should be postponed until late November 2018 rather than be scheduled to dovetail with the CDT Annual Conference on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

#### **5. Course behaviour etiquette**

JU reported that he had been contacted by students attending the Unconventionals course during the field trip element with information about the disruptive and non-collaborative behaviour of some members of the 2017 cohort. He had therefore felt obliged to respond and had chosen to email the entire cohort, partly because the perpetrators had not been named, but also to show those whose willingness to engage with the course was being hampered that the issue is being taken seriously and addressed.

One of the cohort's Graduate Committee representative had replied indicating that there was some disquiet at the tone of the warning and that some had felt the email was aimed at them. JU thought he had managed to clarify the nature of the concerns to allay those fears and he reported that a few students had emailed him directly to thank him for his action. There had been no further correspondence to date from the cohort student representatives.

Members discussed what further sanction could be placed on those continuing with the disruptive behaviour. Engaging with the training element of the CDT model is a pre-requisite for securing the studentship funding, but the threat of removing all funding (i.e. fees and stipend) is an empty one. It was agreed that we could impose an embargo on reimbursing RTSG expenditure from the NERC grant which would bring pressure to bear on the individual's university to cover this cost and perhaps encourage them to push for improved engagement from their student(s).

**Action:** LM will report back after the Dorset field trip in September and further action along these lines will be considered then as appropriate.

LM expressed concern that although we do not want to be adopting an 'undergraduate-level' monitoring approach, there is a danger that responsible students who notify their absence from one or two days of a course for example, and are informed that the missed days must be made up from other training courses, feel they are being penalised for their honesty when other students consistently turn up late, fail to appear with notice, or decide to attend other activities they deem more interesting. The issue is becoming more widespread across cohorts and there is a risk that students thinking they are free to make up their own minds about what and when to attend will become the norm. It was agreed that attendance should be recorded on the basis that this is required both for Health & Safety requirements and to prove completion of the training programme for the purposes of accreditation. **Action:** LM to update CDT Course Attendance guidance document and circulate this with a covering email from JU.

## 6. Future course provision

AC reported that a new field trip to Spain entitled Fluvial and Shallow Marine Sedimentology has only attracted four of five students but as the course leader, Stu Clarke, was going anyway and taking other non-CDT Keele students, it was decided to go ahead with the CDT students to see whether it would be worth adding more permanently to the CDT training calendar. A number of students have said they are interested in the course but the short notice meant they already had other commitments for this September.

AC asked for members' views on amending the Carbonate Science course, which had been delivered for this first time this year by Henk Droste, to take up an offer from Rob Butler to contribute to this topic. An approach to Cathy Hollis at Manchester was also suggested.

**Action:** AC to follow up with all proposed parties to re-cast this course for 2019

The Biostratigraphy course which had been added to the mandatory Challenging Environments course for the 2015 and 2016 cohorts has been returned to an elective course for the 2017 cohort. The loss of this course to their training schedule, and the curtailment of some of the Year 1 mandatory courses by a day or two means that we need to identify another 9.5 days of mandatory training for this cohort. We also need to identify a further 5.5 days of mandatory training for the 2015 cohort in their writing-up year (2018/19) to ensure that they fulfil the 100 day training requirement. It is unfair at this late stage to require students to find additional elective days instead when a number already find it difficult to cover the 20 day elective

component. **Action:** AC to provide proposals for 2015 cohort's 5.5 days urgently. The desirability of securing an Environmental/Civil Engineering course through collaboration between Dundee and Strathclyde was proposed as a replacement for the Biostratigraphy course, and could be 'trialled' as a 2.5 day course with the 2015 cohort with a view to increasing the length to 4 or 5 days.

AC asked for suggestions for a replacement GISD tutor as Joe Cartwright will not lead another course. JU suggested George Bertram. **Action:** AC to follow up on contact details with JU

The unfavourable direction of the Euro exchange rate is impacting on the cost of European field trips such as the Alps and Co. Clare so future provision will need to be carefully costed and considered.

AC reported that it is becoming increasingly difficult to schedule so many elective courses while avoiding mandatory course dates. AC and LM confirmed that students are always advised to prioritise the mandatory course.

#### **7. Annual Conference, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018**

The conference will be held in a larger city centre venue this year, the Edinburgh International Conference Centre. The 2015 cohort will be given a 15 minute presentation slot in one of two lecture theatres, while the 2016 and 2017 cohorts will present posters in 3 rooms. Following feedback on the 2017 conference format from students and delegates, which highlighted that students were not always available at their posters during the designated sessions, or that no delegates viewed their poster, each student will have a timed slot when they must be available to present their poster. AC noted that this could have an even greater negative effect on a student if no delegates or other students were there for the timed slot. Students from the 2014 cohort who did not present at the 2017 conference are being offered the opportunity to give an oral presentation at this year's conference, and any 2014 students who wish to may also offer to present a poster. There is a limit on poster numbers however and priority will be given to the 2016 and 2017 cohorts.

#### **8. CDT Training Academy budget update**

LM reported that the funding model indicates a surplus of £172,877 after delivery of the training programme to the first four CDT cohorts. LM will update the model once student numbers for the 2018 entry cohort are known. If student travel costs to get to training venues are included, the model shows a deficit of £121,723. LM noted the difficulties of getting accurate information from partner universities regarding these travel costs which the Management Committee had indicated should be covered from the training budget rather than students' RTSG allowances if at all possible. On the basis of RTSG information that has been returned to date, LM reported that no student had spent more than 10% of their annual RTSG expenditure on travel to CDT courses. There are also reports of students making travel arrangements at the last minute and having to pay high 'walk-on' fares and it would not be fair on other more diligent students if this expenditure was covered by the training budget.

LM reported that NERC have confirmed that unspent RTSG monies can be used to provide stipend payments for PhD writing-up extension periods. There will be some unclaimed monies in the NERC grant as a result of the withdrawal of some grant-funded students who were not then replaced. There are cases where the remaining years of the studentship have been transferred to a replacement student recruited in a subsequent year and the understanding has been that their university will find the additional funds to cover the 'missing' years. However, LM expects that there will be requests from partners for unspent funds from the grant to be used to cover the costs of replacement students. Members agreed to propose to the Management Committee that a 'Hardship Fund' be established with requests for funding assessed by a panel (membership to be determined). **Action:** LM to add item to agenda for next CDT Management Committee

#### 9. Review of 2014 student cohort's training record for purposes of accreditation

LM presented an overview of each student's attendance on mandatory courses and a listing of the CDT and non-CDT elective courses. 23 of the 26 students have either completed the 100 day requirement, or will have done so provided they attend mandatory and elective courses they are signed up for between now and December 2018. One student at Imperial has only completed 83 days of training but has indicated that they will not try to make up the deficit as accreditation is not of value and the individual has already secured ongoing employment.

Members agreed that exceeding the default maximum of 10 days of non-CDT provided elective provision should not be a barrier to graduating from the Training Academy programme if 100 days of approved training has been completed. It is likely that 5 students will have exceeded the 10 day maximum by between 2 and 6.5 days.

#### 10. AOCB

LM circulated a request from the GSL for volunteers to sit on a formal committee tasked with setting up an Early Career Network. Members welcomed this initiative and agreed that the request be circulated to the 2014 cohort students and supervisors, principal CDT contacts at each partner university and the YP mentors. **Action:** LM to circulate GSL email

Action	Agent
Follow up with JU on suggested contacts for infrastructure site visits e.g. Barrow-on Furness gas pipeline	AC
Report on student behaviour to TAC after September Dorset field trip to determine if discussion with supervisor and host institution regarding RTSG reimbursement is appropriate	LM
Update Course Attendance policy guidance document outlining HSE and accreditation requirement to complete a daily attendance check on CDT courses to be circulated with covering email from JU	LM/ JU
Revise the format of the Carbonate Geoscience course for 2018 to take up offers of contributions from Rob Butler and possibly Cathy Hollis	AC

Provide proposals to cover 2015 cohort's missing 5.5 days of mandatory course by end of 2018 to allow students to plan attendance during their writing-up period	AC
Liaise with JU to contact George Bertram as possible replacement tutor for GISD elective course	AC
Add the establishment of a 'Hardship Fund' to the agenda for the next CDT Management Committee meeting	LM
Circulate GSL's Early Career Network Committee volunteer request to 2014 cohort students and supervisors, principal CDT contacts and YP mentors	LM

DRAFT