



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

Training Academy course attendance and policy for inclusion of externally provided courses

Introduction

The NERC CDT Training Academy programme comprises 20 weeks of courses ranging from 1 day to two weeks and covering the four research themes of the CDT; Environmental Impact & Regulation, Extending the Life of Mature Basins, Exploitation in Challenging Environments and Unconventional Hydrocarbons. Funding for the Training Academy programme is derived entirely from the CDT industry sponsors. The aim of the programme is to provide CDT students with opportunities to develop a wider skill set and knowledge of the oil and gas sector, placing oil & gas into its wider geopolitical and all-important environmental context, so as to maximise their employability, be that in the academic, public (government or NGO) or commercial sector.

The CDT studentships are fully funded for a period of four years in order to accommodate the 20 week training commitment and receipt of NERC funding is predicated on all CDT students attending and completing the full training programme. As of December 2015, the training programme is split into 16 weeks of mandatory courses and 4 weeks of optional courses, chosen initially from a list provided by the CDT administration through the CDT Training Academy Committee. The split of courses is ten weeks mandatory in Year 1, three weeks mandatory in Year 2, two and a half weeks mandatory in Year 3 and half a week in Year 4 with the balance of four weeks of optional modules being taken in Years 2 and 3 as suits the individual student. This split is a best estimate as at December 2015 however, and may be varied for each cohort. The CDT Training Academy Officer will advise students and supervisors in each annual entry cohort of the relevant split of mandatory and optional courses as soon as course titles and dates are confirmed.

Attendance on courses and contribution to the training commitment

Mandatory courses: Students must attend courses designated as mandatory on the CDT Training Academy schedule. If a student is unable to attend a mandatory course, justification of the absence must be provided with as much notice as possible to the CDT Manager and CDT Training Academy Officer. A student missing a mandatory course is required to attend the course at a subsequent offering for a following cohort.

Optional courses: The CDT Training Academy Committee endeavours to source optional courses that cover the four research themes of the CDT and these are open to all students. Students can choose options that are specific to their PhD project and which provide greater depth of knowledge at a more advanced level, or they can take courses which introduce them to skills and knowledge in areas beyond the narrower focus of their PhD studies as a means of augmenting their CV.

The CDT Management Committee, Training Academy Committee and Industry Advisory Board recognise that there are many courses provided outwith the auspices of the CDT which may be of great value to a student's research and career development. Examples of such courses are the NERC Advanced Training Short Courses scheme which offers free places to any students affiliated to the NERC CDT in Oil & Gas and CPD-accredited workshops and fieldtrips run under the auspices of professionally accredited bodies e.g. the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG), the European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers (EAGE), the Geological Society, Oil & Gas UK, the Petroleum Exploration Society of Great Britain (PESGB), the University Centre Svalbard (UNIS). Provided that a course is open access i.e. available to all CDT students and not just to students from a particular university or discipline for example, the student and supervisor



may request that the course be considered for eligibility towards the optional course component of the CDT Training Programme. The CDT Training Academy's industry sponsors place great value on students' direct interaction in a classroom or in the field with the course providers and other students and hence online or other distance learning courses are not currently eligible for consideration towards the optional course component.

Students and supervisors are asked to limit their requests for such substitution to no more than 10 days of the 20 day optional course allocation as we would like to see students forging bonds by attending courses with CDT students from their own and other cohorts, as well as requiring a minimum number of participants for both field and classroom based courses to make these viable to run.

Procedure to request inclusion of an externally-sourced optional course on student's Training Academy attendance record

The student and supervisor should supply the CDT Manager and Training Academy Officer with details of the external course that they wish to have considered as part of the optional allocation. The proposal should include course dates, name of provider, proof of open access, course syllabus/schedule and costs of attendance, including travel and subsistence. The student and supervisor must also demonstrate that value of the course to the student's portfolio and that the topic is not replicated elsewhere in the Training Academy programme. The information will be circulated to the Chairs of the Industry Advisory Board and Management and Training Academy Committees for consideration and approval. Their decision will be notified by the CDT Manager and the course entered on the student's course attendance record, as appropriate, by the CDT Training Academy Officer.

Training Academy budget contribution to costs of non-CDT provided optional courses

The Training Academy budget pays all course and subsistence costs for courses provided or arranged through the CDT. This is on the basis of a standard budget of £100 per day per individual. If a student requests to substitute an externally sourced optional course and this is granted, reimbursement of costs will be provided up to the standard budget level upon receipt of documented proof of expenditure on accommodation, subsistence, course costs and travel during the course. The current limit for contribution to externally-provided optional courses is 10 days so for example, if a student attends 2-week externally-sourced optional course, but has already completed 15 days of optional courses directly provided by the CDT, a claim for 5 days contribution to the 2 week course (£500) can be made. The student and supervisor should expect to pay the balance of any such optional course costs from the student's Research Training and Support Grant, or other funding sources that they have access to.

Use of RTSG vs. externally-sourced optional courses

The caveat to the proposed contribution to externally provided courses outlined above is that the Training Academy budget must not be viewed as a funding resource that is additional to the RTSG. As outlined above, the CDT studentship is of 4 years' duration to accommodate the additional training element. A standard 3/3.5 year PhD studentship also includes time to attend conferences, field trips and training courses and the RTSG allowance is available to support these activities. CDT partners are expected to support and give priority to attendance on CDT-provided courses and to consider external courses only in cases where there is no suitable CDT provision or timings of CDT optional courses preclude attendance for the allocated number of optional days.