# NERC Funded Research Experience Placements (REPs) FAQs

### What is a NERC science subject?

NERC is the Natural Environment Research Council and as such the NERC subjects are the environmental sciences such as biology, biological sciences, ecology, marine biology, soil science, geography and geology, archaeology, atmospheric and polar sciences. For the full description please visit the NERC website.

### Which disciplines are eligible?

All science disciplines are eligible however NERC are specifically looking to tackle a shortage of quantitative skills in the environmental sciences, therefore candidates from quantitative disciplines will be prioritised. Quantitative disciplines include but are not limited to: mathematics, statistics, finance, architecture, computing, engineering, psychology, physics and chemistry.

### Can I apply for a project within my own school/discipline?

No, applicants must apply for a project outwith the discipline of their degree. For example, biological sciences students would be eligible to apply for projects within the school of geoscience and the school of natural and built environment; but they would not be eligible to apply for projects within either of our biological sciences schools. The purpose of this stipulation is to bring new skills into the environmental sciences.

### My school encompasses several disciplines, can I apply to a project within my school if it is a different discipline?

Yes, in the case of amalgamated schools such as SNBE at QUB, applicants can apply for projects within that same school, provided they apply to a different discipline, for example, a student studying an engineering degree could apply for a project within the discipline of geosciences or archaeology.

### Can I apply for multiple projects?

Please apply for a maximum of **one** project. Multiple applications will not be considered.

### Do I have to be a registered student at a QUADRAT partner institution?

Yes, you must currently be studying for an undergraduate degree at either the University of Aberdeen or at Queen's University Belfast. You must be a registered student at the time of the placement taking place and therefore final year undergraduates, recent graduates and alumni are not eligible to apply.

### Are REPs projects paid placements?

A salary of up to £3,584.32 is available at the National Living Wage. The successful candidates will be set up as employees and paid a salary (grade 1, spinal point 7) at the university's current living wage of c. £11.10 per hour. The salary will be paid monthly in arrears following submission of a monthly timesheet. A further £500 will be available for project research and training expenses, the costs of which must be itemised and justified in the final report. Contracts will stipulate a maximum of 189 working hours.

### Are placements full time or part-time? Is there flexibility in the working pattern?

Placements will be on a part-time basis, likely 2-3 days per week (max. 189 working hours over the duration of the project). This equates to approximately 18 hours per week for 10 weeks. You will need to agree a suitable working pattern with the project supervisor – hours can vary from week to week but must not exceed 189 hours in total. REPs placements must be 6-10 weeks long, therefore you cannot complete all 189 hours in fewer than 6 weeks. Monthly timesheets will be required.

### I am a final year UG student and I will have finished my course before the placement starts. Can I still apply?

No, unfortunately final year students are not eligible to apply because they will no longer be a registered student with the institution at the time the placement takes place. Only $1^{st}$, $2^{nd}$ and $3^{rd}$ year students are eligible, and $4^{th}$ year students in the case of a 5 year programme such as MEng or an integrated Masters.

### Does a REPs project count towards my Honours project?

No, a REPs placement does not count towards your honours project. The REP scheme is a standalone scheme outwith your degree. If you are completing your honours project and will graduate this year then you are not eligible to apply. Final year undergraduate students are not eligible to apply because they will no longer be a registered student at the time of the placement taking place.

### Can I earn credits towards my degree by completing a REPs placement?

No, the REPs placement is extra-curricular and does not contribute towards your degree but is a valuable experience and opportunity to develop new skills.

### Do I need to have experience in environmental sciences?

No prior knowledge or education in the environmental sciences is required. Projects do not assume knowledge in these areas but instead put value on the quantitative skills you can bring to the environmental sciences. Training will be provided where necessary.

### Do I need a specific skill set?

This depends on the project and the work that is required. Some projects require a candidate with a specific background (such as a computer science student) or a specific skill set (such as coding), but others are more general. You are asked to demonstrate how you meet the needs of the project in the application form. Supervisors will select candidates with the most appropriate skills for the project.

### Will I get training on the job?

Some projects will require you to already have specific skill sets such as coding (this will be specified in the advertised project description), however additional training will be provided in the areas required for you to complete the project. Training will vary from project to project – some details are given in the project overview, but supervisors can provide more information if required.

### Will I need specialist software or equipment?

It is expected that applicants will have the capacity and computing infrastructure (internet connection and laptop / desktop computer) to work from home/campus, however some supervisors may be able to loan out a laptop (please see project descriptions / contact the project supervisor). It may also be possible to borrow a laptop from the central university. Please speak to the supervisor in the first instance.  Supervisors will provide access to any specialist software.

### Should I contact the supervisor before I apply?

You are not required to contact the supervisor before applying, but you may do so if you have questions about the project content or skills required.

### What is the selection process? Will there be an interview?

After the deadline has passed, supervisors will assess the applications they have received and identify the most suitable candidate. One candidate for each project will be asked to attend a brief interview (15-20 minutes) via Microsoft Teams. Once the interviews have been completed, the top 6 candidates will be awarded the project and funding.

### If successful, do I need to complete any paperwork to confirm the placement?

You will be required to complete a contract of temporary employment and a right to work check prior to starting your placement. Instructions will be provided to successful applicants.

It is a NERC requirement that the candidate completes a brief final report form (online form) upon completion of the placement. This form will be provided towards the end of the placement. We will also ask you to write a testimonial and a short blog post about your placement experience. You can find examples of these here:

Testimonials: https://www.quadrat.ac.uk/opportunities/ug-research-experience-placements/
Blog posts: https://www.quadrat.ac.uk/category/research-experience-placement/

## Do I need to provide proof of my nationality?
A right to work / passport check will be undertaken to confirm successful candidates' eligibility to work in UK. This process will be handled by the University of Aberdeen.

Non-UK candidates: HR may also ask us to complete an online right to work check to verify your right to work in the UK. This will be done via this Online Check Tool  to complete this check we will need to you provide us with your Share Code and your date of birth.