

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

The Anaerobic Digestion Network – a BBSRC NIBB

Business Interaction Vouchers



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Introduction

Anaerobic Digestion Network - a BBSRC NIBB

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) has committed £18M to fund 13 collaborative Networks in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (BBSRC NIBB). The BBSRC NIBB will foster collaborations between academia, industry, policy makers and NGOs in order to find new approaches to tackle research challenges, translate research and deliver key benefits in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (IBBE). Each network has a particular focus area, mainly within the UK, but with interest to build international links. Details of all of the Networks can be found on the BBSRC website (<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/bbsrcnibb>).

These multidisciplinary networks will drive new ideas to harness the potential of biological resources for producing and processing materials, biopharmaceuticals, chemicals and energy. The Networks can provide Proof of Concept funding, Business Interaction Vouchers and events and are open to new members.

The BBSRC NIBB, along with the IB Catalyst, form the central part of the BBSRC's strategy to support the development of IBBE as a key component of the UK bio-economy. The Networks will help to provide sustainable processes for producing bio-based alternatives to products which currently rely on petrochemicals.

The Anaerobic Digestion Network (AD Network) addresses scientific and technical challenges in the development of anaerobic biotechnology, drawing on the expertise of leading academics underpinned by new tools and concepts. As well as enhancing the performance of anaerobic digestion as a second generation bioenergy process, these can create new areas of application in the creation of value-added bio-based products, widening the process scope to a biorefinery. Bio-molecular tools open up the possibility of improved diagnostics and advanced on-line process control, topics of immediate interest to industry. For more information, see the website (<http://www.anaerobicdigestionnet.com>).

The AD Network is led by an Executive Board comprising Professor Charles Banks, University of Southampton (Primary Investigator) and Professor Orkun Soyer, University of Warwick (Co-Investigator).

Business Interaction Vouchers (BIV)

What is a BIV?

The BIV scheme is a BBSRC-funded initiative aimed at connecting industry and academic partners together. Essentially, the voucher enables industry partners to 'buy' an academic's time and expertise to look at a specific problem. The application and approval process is designed to be simple and straightforward.

Priority will be given to proposals that, for example:

- Aid technology transfer
- Work towards 'solving' a technical problem for an industrial partner
- Adapt an existing technology for a new application

An amount of **£200,000** has been made available to the Anaerobic Digestion Network for this purpose, to be allocated over 5 years.

Note: In a change to earlier publicity, the maximum amount which may be awarded has been raised from £5000 to £10,000.

Aims and Objectives in relation to the BIVs

The BIV vouchers are intended to help resource small confidence-building measures between an academic partner and an industrial based partner that are likely to lead to outcomes of:

- a longer-term relationship
- improved interaction
- new research technology transfer projects

The vouchers should fund new collaborations as a priority, but can be used to fund continued collaborations. Examples of projects include, but are not limited to, generating new experimental data, data analysis, technical consultancy or literature review.

Details/Eligibility

- Vouchers are up to £10k (incl. VAT) maximum
- Vouchers are awarded to the academic partner to tackle a problem relevant to the industrial partner
- The industrial partner contribution is expected to be at least to the value of the business interaction voucher as a cash or in-kind contribution
- The work must be clearly defined from the outset and must be completed within 6 months*
- Participants must be members of the BBSRC AD Network and based in the UK
- The work must be relevant to the aims of the AD Network
- Consortium building is not eligible as the sole purpose of a BIV; meetings and consortium building can form part of a BIV, but should not be the sole purpose

Any AD Network member may apply for these vouchers; the funds are awarded to the academic partner who must be a lecturer eligible to receive BBSRC funding. Eligibility guidelines can be found at www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidelines/grants-guide.pdf. BBSRC NIBB Interaction Vouchers are

considered as *de minimis* aid and industrial partners need to ensure they are not in breach of *de minimis* aid rules by accepting the Interaction Voucher. Further information can be obtained at www.gov.uk/state-aid.

To register as an AD Network member, visit www.anaerobicdigestionnet.com, or contact Angela Bywater/Dr Louise Byfield at ADNet@soton.ac.uk for further details.

Common queries

Do I have to apply for the maximum amount?

No. You can apply for any amount depending on your circumstances. It may be that matching funds available from the industry partner are limited or that academic resource for the job is limited, e.g. a PhD student will be utilised, so will be limited by the 6 hour rule. Alternatively, if the industrial partner is offering a substantial commitment (e.g. through the contribution of surplus equipment or equipment time), the academic partner is under no compulsion to ask for a similar amount if it is not required. This is a flexible amount provided that genuine matching funds (in cash or in kind) from industry are met or exceeded.

Can all the Industry contribution be in kind?

Below the £5K level an entirely *in kind* contribution from industry, whilst not ideal, is acceptable provided the contribution and benefit to the project is made clear. At higher funding requests we would like to see a more substantive contribution to the project that might include cash contribution to salary, non-standard equipment use or hire, the direct purchase of consumables etc. A clear explanation enables reviewers to distinguish between bids with a genuine industry commitment to the project rather than those largely research-led.

What kind of expenses can be included for the industrial 'in kind' contribution?

'In kind' contributions can include items such as the loan of equipment, provision of samples & sampling, travel expenses, and staff time for meetings, contributions to reports or other work on the project. The figures should be reasonable and justifiable for the amount of work required or equipment loaned.

Can a PhD student be used to do the work?

PhD students are covered by the 6 hour rule. Thus, they are limited in the amount of work they can contribute to a BIV project. Also, work conducted through a BIV may not form part of their thesis. Within these limits, a BIV can be offered. Please be sure to specify under what conditions the PhD(s) will be working (i.e. separate contract) on your application to avoid delays to the process.

Does the project have to run for 6 months?

No. It could be a short project of 1 month, a full 6 months or anything in between.

What happens if my project exceeds 6 months?

BBSRC will only pay for work within 6 months of the agreed start date. This funding stream is intended as an introduction or "handshake" between industry and academia. If you anticipate a longer project, please seek alternative funding, for example, through Innovate UK.

There is the possibility of negotiating a discontinuous BIV where the work is “cut” into segments. This would only be considered if it was inherent and essential to the project (e.g. a growing trial with 1 month of work in spring and 1 month of work in autumn but no activity between). This would need to be discussed with us and negotiated with BBSRC *prior to application*. No alteration to the agreed work plan will be countenanced after acceptance.

My industry partner is worried about confidentiality and intellectual property. What is the situation?

We will ask for a publically available report on the work, but you are free to omit sensitive or confidential information from it.

We make no claim on your IP rights. This is specified in the contract that you will be offered upon acceptance. We do ask you to state that you have an agreement in place between you, specifying relative contributions and IP ownership, before you start work. We do not need to see this.

This agreement could be as simple as one partner forfeiting all rights or as complicated as you wish. Please bear in mind that once it is in place you may want to use it for all subsequent work with this industry partner, and as such it is a worthwhile investment.

I already have a BIV running. Can I ask for another with a different industry partner?

Yes. As long as this is not a continuation of a previously funded BIV, you can apply for as many as you wish, with as many different industry partners as you wish. We strongly encourage new interactions.

I have applied for several BIVs from other NIBBs in the past. Will this affect my chances of success?

No. We understand that there is substantial overlap between areas of biotechnology and expect that active institutions will make multiple applications.

The only way this could be relevant is if you have applied to multiple NIBBs for BIVs with *the same industry partner*. This would be noticed by BBSRC, who oversee the 13 NIBBs. They may then ask for clarification to determine why these count as new interactions, which would delay the process of approval. There are some global companies with large IB interests in diverse areas. It could be the case that applying to different departments with varying proposals would make sense but please give us as much context on the application as you can and be patient if we need to seek more information.

Can I claim estates and overheads?

This is Research Council money and they already assist Universities through the block grant. The AD Network expects the costings to reflect your standard auditable salary costs (including National Insurance and Pension), travel and consumables for these small grants but will not accept “Day Rates” or added overheads. Speak to your Finance Department for a full explanation of the rules regarding Research Council funding in the UK.

I have a partner in mind but I don't know which NIBB to apply to.

You can email or call us and we will be happy to talk through the options. Details of all the NIBBs are available through the BBSRC website. You can also find a section on NIBB-funded projects that might help you place your work in context.

I have an idea for a useful project but don't have an industry partner. Can you help?

Yes. We could circulate a request among our members or through our newsletter. We have many industry members who could be interested in a partnership. We may also be able to approach specific AD members on your behalf, depending on the nature of the project. Contact us to see how we can help.

Application Process

How to Apply

Application is through a simple pro-forma available from www.anaerobicdigestionnet.com or email ADNet@soton.ac.uk. The funding call is open for the lifetime of the Network. To ensure even distribution of funds throughout the lifetime of the network, the call may be put on hold if more than £50,000 is allocated in any one year (at the discretion of the Executive Board, details to be posted on website).

From January 2016, all applications will be accepted on a 3 monthly basis. The closing dates are to the end of March, June, September and December. All applications within that 3 month period will be reviewed and then jointly assessed at a Panel meeting the following month. Applicants should receive a response within 4-6 weeks from that point. Applications can be submitted by either partner, but must be collaborative. Unsuccessful proposals may be re-submitted once only.

A letter of support signed by the industrial partner detailing their matching contribution must be sent with the application.

Applications should be sent electronically to ADNet@soton.ac.uk and will be acknowledged upon receipt. Should an acknowledgement not be received in good time, please contact the Network Managers directly to ensure your application is processed.

The Application Form

This section explains the structure of the application forms and offers guidance on the information to include in each section.

The purpose of the application form is to obtain enough information on the project to enable assessors to understand how well it aligns with the Network objectives, and to score various categories.

No appendices are required. If you wish to add scientific references to your text, please add them to a separate appendix with your name and reference number (if known). No more than 10 references will be considered. Any other specialist information, pictures or diagrams that you wish to add to your application should also accompany the application in an appendix. Be aware that reviewers are free to ignore any information not contained in the application form itself.

There are 7 sections in the form. Each section is weighted at 10 points, giving a total possible score of 70 points. Each section has a threshold value assigned to it. Any application that falls below the threshold value for any question may be rejected. Thresholds are as follows:

- Relevance to aims of the BBSRC NIBB (7/10)
- Proposed work (7/10)
- Project deliverables (6/10)
- Value to Industrial partner (6/10)
- Benefit to research and industrial partnership (7/10)
- Value for money (8/10)
- Potential for building longer-term relationships (7/10)

Structure

The structure of the application form is as follows:

Page 1	Page 2	Page 3
Proposal title	Aims and methodology	Sections 1 – 7
Applicant details	Expected outcomes and timeline	Financial Breakdown
Industrial Partner details		
Chosen focus area		

It is important that you address and respond to each section clearly. To help you, the guidance below provides an explanation of what is required for each field. The guidance notes are not intended to be exhaustive; you should develop your own responses based on your own skills, knowledge and experience.

You may refer to other sections of the form in your answers if this will help avoid repetition. Maximum word limits apply to certain form fields. These are specified in the field guidance section below. It is important that you complete each field and present a fully completed form. Incomplete forms will be rejected.

The typeface should be Arial or Calibri, font size 11 and colour black. Please check your completed application form in PRINT VIEW: any text that can't be seen in this view or when the form is printed will not be read.

Field Guidance

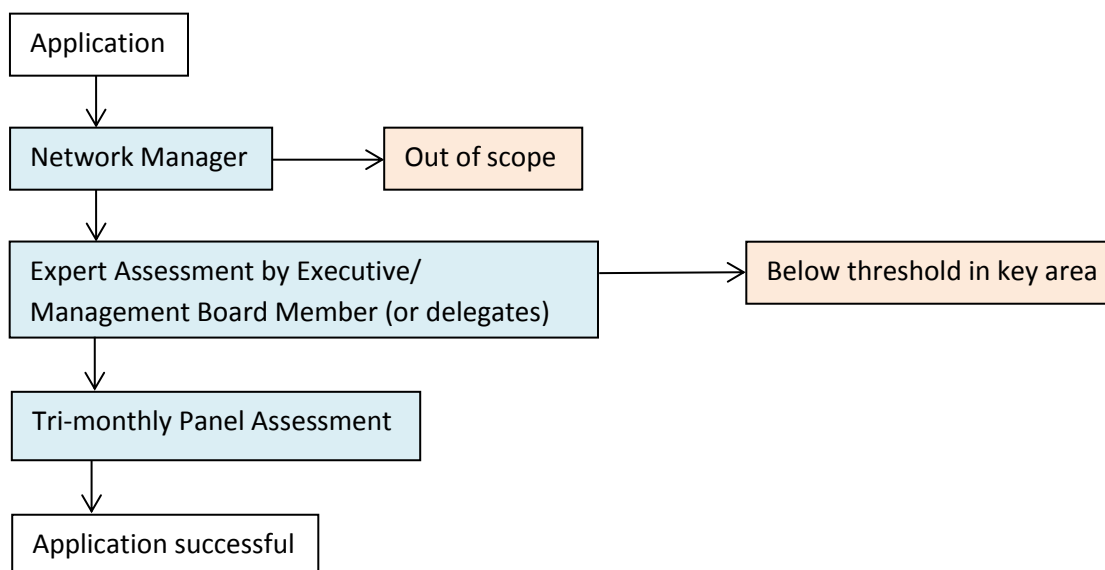
BIV Application Form		
Required Fields	Guidance	Maximum word limits/ Further clarification
Application details		
Proposal Title	Please give a title for your application.	Word limit - 25
Proposal Summary	Please summarise the aims of your project. If your proposal is funded, this summary will be used for publicity purposes by the BBSRC and the AD Network.	Word limit – 250 This summary may be made publically available.
Applicant contact details	Enter the full name, address, postcode, e-mail address and	No word limit.

	telephone number of the Primary Contact between the AD Network and the proposal. This will be the grant holder in the event of a successful bid.	According to BBSRC conditions, this should be a lecturer (or equivalent) from a UK University.
Please confirm that you are a member of the AD Network and eligible for BBSRC funding	See Eligibility	Y/N
Industrial and Academic Partner details	Enter the full name, address, postcode, e-mail address and telephone number of the partners	No word limit. Please ensure that the named industrial partner has joined the AD Network.
Are you aware of any conflicts of interest that should be considered with regard to this proposal – e.g. associations with Management Board members?	Yes/No	If 'Yes' give details. This section enables us to manage potential conflicts of interest during the review process.
Chosen Focus Area	The Focus Area you select will help us determine which group of expert reviewers will assess your proposal. The main areas are: a) Biomolecular Tools b) The VFA factory c) Optimisation of AD processes d) Feedstock enhancements e) Process integration & modelling f) Environmental interactions and societal challenges	Please select one or more of the Focus areas.
Proposal details		
Project abstract	Please give the main aim of your project and summarise the proposed methodology and likely outcomes.	Word limit - 400
Expected timeline	Please provide a brief timescale and justification for this.	Word limit - 100
Sections 1-7		
The proposal will be scored in these sections. Failure to reach the threshold in any one of the 7 sections will result in the failure of the application	Score must match or exceed the threshold in each section	
Section 1: Relevance to aims of the BBSRC NIBB		
1. Indicate how you believe the proposal will result in a new association within the Network or assist in development of a pre-existing relationship 2. Show how your proposal contributes to technology transfer by working towards	Threshold score (7/10) Word limit - 100	

solutions to technical problems or adapting existing technology for new applications 3. Specify if this a new collaboration	
Section 2: Proposed work	
1. State how your methodology is appropriate and sufficient to the stated aims 2. Indicate how the work will be of wider value to the AD community 3. Explain how the work expands our current knowledge in a meaningful way	Threshold score (7/10) Word limit - 100
Section 3: Project deliverables	
1. State exactly what will be the outcome of this project in terms of technical content. 2. State exactly what change in understanding/process/testing regime etc. will result from this work	Threshold score (6/10) Word limit - 100
Section 4: Value to Industrial partner	
1. State what the outcome of the project will mean to the industrial partner in terms of savings, efficiencies, profitability, potential new markets or other benefits 2. Show how the project will benefit the Industrial partner in the future	Threshold score (6/10) Word limit – 100
Section 5: Benefit to research and industrial partnership	
1. Describe how the project is a genuine partnership in terms of the respective contributions of knowledge, skills, tools and/or materials etc. and what both parties will gain from the association	Threshold score (7/10) Word limit - 100
Section 6: Value for money	
Explain why the proposed work would be unlikely to happen without BBSRC NIBB funding and what makes this method of doing the work cost effective. 2. Justify the level of expenditure requested	Threshold score (8/10) Word limit - 100
Section 7: Potential for building longer-term relationships	
1. Describe how the proposal is likely to build trust, deepen understanding or lead to further work in the future. If this is a new association explain how you might strengthen the association in the future	Threshold score (7/10) Word limit - 100
Financial Breakdown of BIV request	
Please provide a brief financial breakdown of your proposal in the table in pounds sterling (incl. VAT)	The rules on VAT for Universities can be complex with research activity and consumables classed separately – please seek specialist advice from your institution if unclear. Please note BIV funding cannot be used to purchase equipment. This means equipment of any kind, even single complete pieces under £10k. Salary, travel and purchase of consumables

	<p>are acceptable. A consumable is something used up in the course of the project.</p> <p>Please note that BIV funding cannot contribute in any way to a research degree. The purpose of the BIV scheme is essentially for industry to buy academic time (similar to contract research) and due to the nature of this we wouldn't expect these projects to form part of a PhD or MSc thesis due to any commercial/confidential nature of the research.</p> <p>PhD students can work on BIV projects for 6 hours a week or under ("6 hour rule"), with the BIV forming a distinct piece of work and requiring an employment contract separate to their stipend.</p> <p>In order to maximise the value of the award and the outcomes of the collaborative measures, Business Interaction Vouchers are intended to support only direct costs incurred by the eligible partner during the project. Estates and Indirect costs will not be eligible for AD Network support, and should be supported by the awarded institution or the industrial partner.</p>
<p>Please break this down further into named staff costs/time, travel costs and consumables</p>	<p>Staff costs should be at official University approved costings, e.g. 3 days/Mr A N Other: Technician/£120/day = £360.</p> <p>Travel costs should state the purpose of travel, e.g. 3 progress meetings for 2 staff/£100pp = £600.</p> <p>Consumables should be broadly defined e.g. Media and lab consumables £500; specific equipment time £400.</p>
Financial Breakdown of Industry Contribution	
<p>Please specify the value of any contribution to the project from other project participants, in pounds sterling (incl. VAT)</p>	<p>In cash/in kind.</p> <p>Applicants are advised that where bids incorporate a large "in kind" commitment from the Industrial partner, this should be a meaningful contribution that reflects value for money and is apparent to a reviewer.</p>
<p>Please break this down further into named staff costs/time, travel costs and consumables/contributions.</p>	<p>Estimated staff costs should be stated e.g. 3 days/ Mr A N Other: Director /£200/day = £600.</p> <p>Travel costs should state the purpose of travel e.g. 3 progress meetings for 2 staff/£100pp = £600.</p> <p>Consumables/Contributions should be broadly defined e.g. Value of donated digestate for trial £500; use of specific company equipment value: £400 etc.</p>

Process for BIV review



Submissions will first be sifted by the Network Managers to ensure they are consistent with the aims and objectives of the Network. If they are out of scope of this network, they will be rejected. They will then be grouped according to their chosen focus area and passed to reviewers (up to 3) for assessment.

Applications with an average score at or above the threshold in the 7 categories will be considered for funding by the Tri-monthly Panel Assessment while funds are available.

We aim to assess proposals within 4-6 weeks from this point. All applicants will be given feedback on their proposal.

Reviewers will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity as laid down by the BBSRC (Ref: http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Policies/good_scientific_practice.pdf). Briefly, in the event of a conflict of interest, this must be declared to the Executive Board who will reassign the proposal to an alternative reviewer.

What happens if you are successful?

If successful, the Primary Contact will be informed via email. Following this, you will be sent a Conditional Grant Offer Letter. This must be signed and returned **within 3 months** to indicate acceptance of the award.

The following are examples of documents that may be requested in the Conditional Offer Letter:

- Confirmation that there is in place a Collaboration Agreement*, for collaborative projects.
- A letter confirming your BACS details, for payment purposes.

*The Collaboration Agreement should be created between the project participants and it should incorporate the operation and exploitation of the outcomes of the project. The AD Network does not need to see a copy, but you are required to state that you have in place a document specifying the relative contributions to, and IP ownership issues regarding, the bid. The AD Network accepts that any Intellectual Property arising from the bid is owned by the applicants.

It can take some time to reach agreement on this document within the consortium participants, especially considering the involvement of applicants' legal and finance departments. You are therefore strongly advised to allow sufficient time. An example of collaboration agreement can be found on the Lambert Agreement website at: <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/lambert>.

If successful, before the project begins, a start date must be agreed with the AD Network Manager. Projects **must** be completed within 6 months of this date. This is a BBSRC requirement.

Reports

A brief mid-term report (1 page) must be submitted to summarise progress after 3 months. This is for monitoring purposes. Once the project is completed, the academic partner must submit a short report (1 page) on the work carried out and the resources used, which must be countersigned by the industrial partner. The partners must also submit a brief 'project completion' form (max. 500 words) whose content will act as a publishable summary for use by the BBSRC, posting on the AD Network website and other promotional activities.

Reports will be passed to the Executive Board to be signed off prior to funds being released. An invoice for the full amount to be claimed must accompany the final and short reports to enable transfer of funds.

Partners will be encouraged to present the results and promote the BIV scheme at Network events.

Costs and payment

Business Interaction Vouchers can be requested up to £10,000 (incl. VAT). This is the maximum level allowed, but requests for smaller, variable amounts are also welcome.

BIV costs should be requested at 100% FEC. The University of Southampton will then transfer this to the institution awarded the BIV up to 3 months in arrears upon the submission of an invoice and acceptance of reports.

The industrial partner must sign the short report to confirm that the matching funds criterion has been met. Without this confirmation, funds cannot be released.

Other Information

Data Protection Regulations

The PI of the BBSRC NIBB grant has the responsibility for keeping data relating to the grant secure and safe. Copies of the applications will be made available to the BBSRC, who will use this information for research related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of funds, statistical analysis in relation to evaluation of the BBSRC NIBB, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

Copies will also be made available to reviewers, the Executive Board and Management Board for the purpose of assessment and evaluation such as; processing the proposal, the award of any consequential grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the grant. They will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity as laid down by the BBSRC (Ref: http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Policies/good_scientific_practice.pdf).

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of funded awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publically available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

We are expecting applicants to conform to the BBSRC guidelines for data sharing: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/publications/policy/data-sharing-policy.aspx> and good scientific practice: http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Policies/good_scientific_practice.pdf.

Intellectual Property

The Network is seeking to create an environment where knowledge is shared rapidly for the benefit of the whole community and used effectively to secure new sources of funding. However, it is important for each member to consider the expectations of their own organisation before disclosing proprietary information.

Before engaging in consortium-building activities, you should create an inventory of the intellectual property you may need to disclose and seek advice of the relevant support services team in your own organisation on how best to proceed. Effective collaborations will usually start with an agreement which documents what each partner will contribute and how the outputs will be shared.

Useful advice is available from the:

- UK Intellectual Property office <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/whyuse/research.htm> and <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/about/press/press-release/press-release-2011/press-release-20110519.htm>
- European IPR helpdesk. <https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/>
- BBSRC <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/policies/position/policy/knowledge-exchange-commercialisation.aspx>

Most organisations will have their own consortium agreements but if this is not the case, template agreements such as the DESCAs model consortium agreement available at <http://www.desca-2020.eu/> and the Lambert toolkit templates available at <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/lambert> can be adapted to suit a range of collaborative interactions. The Network can provide some general advice in this area, but your essential first point of contact for all intellectual property and knowledge management decisions should be the support services available within your own organisation.

Contact Details

For any queries, please contact the Network Managers:

Angela Bywater/Dr Louise Byfield at ADNet@soton.ac.uk

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