

# Research Council Policy Internships Scheme

## Guidance for applicants

*A three-month internship opportunity for PhD students funded by the Research Councils of UK Research and Innovation to gain experience of how research can inform policy making.*

**Closing date for applications:** 16:00 BST 13 August 2018

## About the Research Council Policy Internships Scheme

1. Research can make a vital contribution to public policy in a range of areas. Policy making is carried out across a wide range of organisations, including government departments, civil society, groups within parliament and devolved administrations, as well as other public bodies and learned societies.
2. The Research Council Policy Internships Scheme provides an opportunity for PhD students funded by the Research Councils of UK Research and Innovation (AHRC, BBSRC, ESRC, EPSRC, MRC, NERC and STFC) to work for three months in one of a selected group of highly impactful organisations relevant to UK policy. Successful applicants have the opportunity to work on one or more policy topics of interest to both the student and the organisation, by producing at least one briefing paper, participating in a policy inquiry and/or organising a policy event, or equivalent piece of work.
3. The Policy Internships Scheme is competitive with a success rate of approximately 43% across all applications over recent years. Examples of work that previous interns have contributed to during their policy placements can be found [online](#). For the 2018/19 competition round, there are approximately 130 internship places available.

## Eligibility

4. This scheme is open to PhD students funded by the Research Councils of UK Research and Innovation and applicants must state which Research Council(s) fund their doctoral studentship on their application form.
5. To be considered as a Research Council-funded student, and therefore eligible to apply to the scheme, applicants must be in receipt of a minimum of 50% funding from a single Research Council. For any queries relating to funding status, applicants should contact the training grant administrator at their Research Organisation.
6. Students on Tier 4 visas are **not** eligible to apply to the competition at this time as a condition of their visas. This issue is beyond the control of the Research Councils but, for further information, applicants should contact their appropriate Research Organisation faculty office.
7. Research Council funded EU students are eligible to apply to the competition. However due to security vetting requirements, a number of internships are only open to non-UK EU citizens who have resided in the UK for 3-5 years. Applicants should view the Host Partner Information document for further information on security requirements and ensure that they discuss security clearance requirements with preferred host partners well in advance of submitting an application.
8. Part-time Research Council funded students are eligible to apply to the competition. However, not all host partners are able to accommodate a part-time student due to constraints on desk space, supervisor time, planned budgets, etc. Therefore, internship positions cannot be guaranteed

to all part-time students that may apply. Host partners will assess part-time applications on a case-by-case basis with the final decision resting with the host partner. Applicants should contact their preferred host partner in the first instance to discuss the options available before applying. If successful, part-time students who are eligible for funding and submission date extensions (see Funding section below) will have these applied on a part-time basis, i.e. for a 0.5 FTE student, three month equivalent of stipend would be paid over six months and the PhD funding end date would also be extended by six months.

9. All internships must start before the end of a student's funded period of study as well as fulfilling any Research Council specific criteria as appropriate (see Funding section below). All internships must be completed by the end of the 2019 calendar year.

10. Internships are available with 29 host partners (*Listed alphabetically*):

- Age UK
- Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP)
- Committee on Climate Change
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
- Department for Education
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Department for International Development (DFID)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Food Standards Agency
- Government Office for Science (GO-Science)
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
- HM Courts & Tribunals Services
- Home Office
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
- National Assembly for Wales Research Service
- National Library of Scotland
- Natural England
- Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe)
- Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)
- PHG Foundation
- Public Health England
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe)
- Select Committees, House of Commons
- Sentencing Council
- The National Archives
- The Royal Society
- The Royal Society of Biology
- WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme)

11. Further information about these organisations, the internship opportunities available and contact details for host partners are available in the accompanying Host Partner Information document.

### **Application eligibility**

12. Applicants can apply to only **one** host partner but are invited to note a second choice on their application. Applicants may be contacted by their second choice host partner should additional opportunities become available.

13. Some host partners only accept applications from students funded by certain Research Councils, where this is the case, the details are highlighted within the relevant section of the Host Partner Information document.
14. Students funded by STFC are eligible to apply to the Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology (POST) and the Government Office for Science only.
15. Applicants wishing to undertake an internship at the Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology (POST), the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe), the National Assembly for Wales or Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) as their first choice should state this as '**Parliamentary Host**' in the 'Internship Preferences' section of the application form. The parliamentary hosts will be undertaking a joint assessment process with the actual host finalised during the interview process. When indicating the reasons for applying to these hosts on the application form, applicants should complete this section as though the application is being made to the first choice host partner.

### **Funding and travel and accommodation expenses**

16. Internships are financially supported by the Research Councils and host partners. The funding details will depend on the applicant's Research Council and which host partner is chosen. Some Research Councils provide additional funding to cover internships costs while students of other Research Councils should access funds from their training grant, Doctoral Training Partnership, Centre for Doctoral Training, Doctoral Training Centre etc. **Applicants should read Annex A carefully and ensure that they and the training grant holder at their Research Organisation understand the funding arrangements that apply** (the training grant holder is a member of staff at the student's Research Organisation who is responsible for the grant that funds the studentship).
17. For all students, PhD stipend and fees must continue to be paid by their Research Organisation throughout the three-month internship period.
18. Most host partners provide a co-funding contribution to meet eligible travel and accommodation costs arising from the internship up to a maximum limit of £2,400. Accommodation costs can only be claimed by students for whom it is necessary to relocate in order to undertake the internship. To accommodate the variety of training schemes across the Research Councils, the mechanisms for providing these travel and accommodation expenses should be discussed and confirmed between the training grant holder and host partner after being offered a place but prior to undertaking the internship.
19. The Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) and the Parliamentary hosts (Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology (POST), the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe), the National Assembly for Wales or Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe)) do not have a co-funding agreement in place. Therefore, eligible travel and accommodation costs up to a maximum limit of £2,400 arising from internships at one of these four organisations should be claimed from other sources, such as the relevant training grant (see **Annex A** for these funding details for each Research Council).
20. Confirming the mechanisms to reimburse students for travel and accommodation costs of up to a maximum limit of £2,400 for the duration of the internship are the responsibility of the training grant holder and host partner to discuss and agree (i.e. this could be paid directly to the student by the host partner or the host partner could make a contribution to the Research Organisation with the student then being reimbursed from their training grant).

21. Please note, all expense claims must adhere to the [Research Council Travel, Subsistence and Expenses Policy](#).
22. Research Organisations and host partners are strongly encouraged to ensure timely reimbursement of eligible expenses so students are not left out of pocket during their internship.
23. All computing, email and other facilities necessary to complete the policy internship will be supplied by the host partner.
24. Students who are eligible and currently receive a London allowance stipend supplement, will continue to receive this London supplement for the duration of the internship, regardless of host partner location.
25. Students who do not currently receive a London allowance stipend supplement, will not qualify for this, regardless of host partner location. Additional costs arising from undertaking an internship within London are to be met through the internship travel and accommodation allowance.
26. In other situations where a student normally receives an enhanced stipend above the national minimum level, they should be aware that this may not be available for the duration of the internship. Applicants are advised to discuss these details with the training grant holder at their Research Organisation.

### **Working arrangements**

27. Successful applicants are expected to spend as much time as possible working in the host partners' offices. The Research Councils are keen to encourage applicants from all over the UK. For those successful applicants not within reasonable travelling distance of the host partner, travel and accommodation costs are to be covered as described in the Funding section.
28. All host partners are strictly non-partisan – applicants will be required to abstain from any party political or lobbying activity and to uphold the principles of parliamentary / public service. Interns based at Parliamentary organisations will be required to declare and sign a commitment to conduct, conflicts of interest and confidentiality, during their internship. If applicants have any questions concerning this, they should contact their intended host partner for further information.
29. There are no official guidelines or conditions regarding taking annual leave during policy internships. Students are encouraged to undertake their internships full time for the three month internship period however, if any annual leave does need to be taken within this time, this should be arranged between the student and their host partner line manager. Any annual leave should not negatively affect the internship experience, quality of the work or workload.
30. Applications from part-time registered students are welcomed. However, not all host partners are able to accommodate part-time students and will therefore be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the host partner (see the Eligibility section). Please contact your preferred host partner in the first instance to discuss the options available before applying.

### **Start date and length of internship**

31. The internships are for three months and will usually start in the first half of 2019. Following confirmation of award, the host partner will agree a start date with the applicant, the applicant's supervisor and Research Organisation. Students are able to undertake an internship at any point in the 2019 calendar year at a time agreed between these parties.

32. Changes to the start date must be agreed between the applicant, the host partner, the applicant's supervisor and Research Organisation.
33. Successful applicants are not permitted to delay the start date of their policy internship so that it begins following the end of their PhD funded period.

### **Guidance for completion of the application**

34. Applicants must submit a completed [online application form](#). The application must be approved by the student's primary supervisor and the training grant holder before it is submitted (the training grant holder is a member of staff at the student's Research Organisation who is responsible for the grant that funds the studentship). It is possible to save and return to the form on a later occasion.
35. As part of the application, applicants upload three documents which must be in Microsoft Word or PDF format:
  - A CV – this will be used to supplement the written application. This should be no longer than two pages long and must include education and employment history for the last three years.
  - A signed Funding and Permissions Form – this form requires the signature of the applicant, the applicant's lead supervisor and the training grant holder.
  - A summary policy briefing in the style of a [POSTnote](#)– this should not be directly related to the applicant's PhD research topic but instead should be relevant to current issues, legislation and / or government policy.
36. Please note, any attachments uploaded to the online application form using the save and resume function will **not** be saved until the form is submitted. Therefore, users should not add attachments until they are ready to submit their application.
37. The summary policy briefing should be no longer than two sides of A4 in Arial size 11 font **excluding** references and/or diagrams. Applicants should include their full name and the title of the policy briefing in the document header.
38. The summary briefing is not intended to be as long or exhaustive as an actual policy briefing, but applicants should use the document to demonstrate their ability to write in a style suitable for a policy-making (rather than academic) audience and organise the content accordingly.
39. The online application form will automatically close at **16:00 BST 13 August 2018**. Students are strongly encouraged to submit their application well in advance of the 16:00 deadline as servers can be busy and slow to respond. Any application that misses this deadline, is incomplete (**including all the necessary attachments**), or does not meet the eligibility criteria, will not be considered.

### **Assessment**

40. Assessment is via a two-stage process:
  - i. **Written applications**
41. Submitted online application forms will be assessed by representatives from the host partner.
42. The criteria for assessment of the written applications are:

- Motivation and aims for undertaking a policy internship
- Writing style (including impartiality, brevity and clarity)
- Research content
- Policy content
- Impartiality
- Timeliness and relevance

43. Host partners will notify individual candidates who are unsuccessful at the written application stage by end of September 2018 - Please note that unfortunately, not all host partners are able to provide feedback at this stage.

44. Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to stage two:

**ii. Interview**

45. The interviews will take place at a location decided by the host partner.

46. Interview panels will consist of representatives chosen by the host partner.

47. Further details will be provided to applicants who are successful at the sift stage by the host partner. If you have not heard back by the end of November 2018 then please assume you have been unsuccessful.

**End of internship feedback**

48. At the end of the internship, students will be required to complete a Feedback Form detailing their work over the three months and the outcomes achieved. The feedback form can be downloaded from the [UK Research and Innovation website](#) and should be returned via email to [researchcareers@nerc.ac.uk](mailto:researchcareers@nerc.ac.uk). The feedback form will be reviewed by the Research Councils, and stored for twelve months after the end of the internship. Anonymised comments, and certain data in aggregate, will be used in ongoing reviews of the scheme, and in review meetings with the host partners, as evidence for the quality of the internship experience.

**Timeline**

- Policy Internships Scheme opens for applications: June 2018
- Policy Internships Scheme closing date: 13 August 2018
- Sift period: August-September 2018
- Applicants notified of sift outcomes: By end of September 2018
- Interview period: October to November 2018
- Successful applicants informed by: end of November 2018
- Internships commence: from 01 January 2019

**Contacts and further information**

49. The Policy Internships Scheme is coordinated by NERC on behalf of the other Research Councils. Any queries relating to the application process should be directed to the NERC Research Careers Team ([researchcareers@nerc.ac.uk](mailto:researchcareers@nerc.ac.uk)) or the relevant host partner.

50. Further information about the host partners, including relevant contacts, can be found in the Policy Internships Scheme Host Partner Information document.

51. Please note that neither the Research Councils nor the host partners will be able to advise on the strengths or weaknesses of individual proposals.
52. Applications will be accepted by NERC on behalf of the Research Councils. NERC and the other Research Councils are part of UK Research and Innovation and all personal data will be handled in accordance with the UK Research and Innovation [Privacy Notice](#). For the purposes of application assessment and the running of the Policy Internships Scheme, applications and personal data will be securely shared with the relevant host partner organisations.

## **Annex A: Funding details by Research Council**

### **A. AHRC funding details**

#### *Stipend and fees*

1. Your Research Organisation will continue to pay your stipend and fees and your studentship will be extended.
2. For AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) and Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) students, your stipend and fees will be supported as part of the Student Development Fund (SDF).
3. For AHRC students funded through CDA, BGP or BGP:CB awards or project students, AHRC will agree reimbursement terms with the Research Organisation to cover the stipend and fees.

#### *Travel and accommodation*

4. The process for claiming eligible travel and accommodation costs varies depending on your host partner:-
  - a. For students hosted by the Centre for Science and Policy, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, National Assembly for Wales Research Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, travel and accommodation expenses up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship should be claimed from other sources, such as your training grant. If successful, it is important to agree with your Research Organisation's finance office the best way to cover these costs in the short-term prior to your internship. Please contact your training grant nominated contact to discuss.
  - b. For students hosted by other organisations, travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the host partner up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship. If successful, you should contact your host partner and Research Organisation regarding the procedure for claiming these expenses.

### **B. BBSRC funding details**

#### *Stipend and fees*

1. Your Research Organisation will continue to pay your stipend and fees. BBSRC does not offer any extension to the studentship funded period for this internship.
2. BBSRC students undertaking a DTP studentship will have their internship funded as their [PIPS internship](#).
3. Applicants undertaking a BBSRC [CASE studentship](#) will have their internship supported from funds within their training grant.

#### *Travel and accommodation*

4. The process for claiming eligible travel and accommodation costs varies depending on your host partner:-
  - a. For students hosted by the Centre for Science and Policy, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, National Assembly for Wales Research Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, travel and accommodation expenses up to a maximum of

£2,400 for the duration of the internship should be claimed from other sources, such as the training grant.

Any shortfall in funding will need to be met by the cash limit of the training grant.

- b. For students hosted by other organisations, travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the host partner up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship. If successful, you should contact your host partner and Research Organisation regarding the procedure for claiming these expenses.

### **C. ESRC funding details**

#### *Stipend and fees*

1. Your Research Organisation will continue to pay your stipend and fees and your studentship will be extended.
2. The required costs to support stipend and fees should be accessed through your ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) or your equivalent Research Council funding structure.

#### *Travel and accommodation*

3. The process for claiming eligible travel and accommodation costs varies depending on your host partner:-
  - a. For students hosted by the Centre for Science and Policy, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, National Assembly for Wales Research Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, travel and accommodation expenses up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship should be claimed from other sources, such as your DTP. If successful, it is important to agree with your Research Organisation's finance office the best way to cover these costs in the short-term prior to your internship. Please contact your DTP nominated contact to discuss.
  - b. For students hosted by other organisations, travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the host partner up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship. If successful, you should contact your host partner and Research Organisation regarding the procedure for claiming these expenses.

### **D. EPSRC funding details**

#### *Stipend and fees*

1. Your Research Organisation will continue to pay your stipend and fees and your studentship will be extended.
2. These costs must be met from the Research Organisation's existing doctoral training grant.

#### *Travel and accommodation*

3. The process for claiming eligible travel and accommodation costs varies depending on your host partner:-

- a. For students hosted by the Centre for Science and Policy, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, National Assembly for Wales Research Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, the required costs to support travel and accommodation expenses up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship should be met from the Research Organisation's existing doctoral training grant.

If you have any questions regarding the claiming procedure, please email with the subject heading "Policy Internships" to [EPSRCstudentshipqueries@epsrc.ac.uk](mailto:EPSRCstudentshipqueries@epsrc.ac.uk).

- b. For students hosted by other organisations, travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the host partner up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship. If successful, you should contact your host partner and Research Organisation regarding the procedure for claiming these expenses.

## **E. MRC funding details**

### *Stipend and fees*

1. Your Research Organisation will continue to pay your stipend and fees and your studentship will be extended.
2. The required costs to support stipend and fees can be accessed through the [MRC Doctoral Training Partnership \(DTP\) Supplement](#) or other funds. No further supplements will be provided by MRC to support successful internships. You should liaise with your Research Organisation on how to claim necessary expenses for this internship.

### *Travel and accommodation*

3. The process for claiming eligible travel and accommodation costs varies depending on your host partner:-
  - a. For students hosted by the Centre for Science and Policy, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, National Assembly for Wales Research Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, the required costs to support travel and accommodation expenses up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship can be accessed through the [MRC Doctoral Training Partnership \(DTP\) Supplement](#) or other funds. No further supplements will be provided by MRC to support successful internships. You should liaise with your Research Organisation on how to claim necessary expenses for this internship.
  - b. For students hosted by other organisations, travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the host partner up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship. If successful, you should contact your host partner and Research Organisation regarding the procedure for claiming these expenses.

## **F. NERC funding details**

### *Stipend and fees*

1. Your Research Organisation will continue to pay your stipend and fees and your studentship will be extended.
2. After the internship has been completed, NERC students must complete an expense claim form for the stipend and fees incurred during the three month internship period. NERC will then reimburse the Research Organisation for these costs.

*Travel and accommodation*

3. The process for claiming eligible travel and accommodation costs varies depending on your host partner:-
  - a. For students hosted by the Centre for Science and Policy, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, National Assembly for Wales Research Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, travel and accommodation expenses up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship should be claimed in the first instance from your Research Organisation.  
  
After your internship, please include these costs on your expenses claim form, NERC will then reimburse the Research Organisation.
  - b. For students hosted by other organisations, travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the host partner up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship. If successful, you should contact your host partner and Research Organisation regarding the procedure for claiming these expenses.

**G. STFC funding details**

*Stipend and fees*

1. Your Research Organisation will continue to pay your stipend and fees and your studentship will be extended.
2. STFC will transfer funds to your Research Organisation to cover an additional quarter payment for your stipend and fees.

*Travel and accommodation*

3. The process for claiming eligible travel and accommodation costs varies depending on your host partner:-
  - a. For students hosted by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, travel and accommodation expenses up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship will be paid upfront to your Research Organisation.
  - b. For students hosted by the Government Office for Science (GO-Science), travel and accommodation costs will be supported by the host partner up to a maximum of £2,400 for the duration of the internship. If successful, you should contact GO-Science and your Research Organisation regarding the procedure for claiming these expenses.

When reconciling costs, the Research Organisation should put all costs related to the Policy Internships Scheme under the heading "Other Costs".