

Placement Support Scheme

Guidance Notes 2021-22

Quick glance

- Funding to support collaborations with non-academic organisations, involving a strong knowledge exchange dimension of benefit to both parties.
- Up to a maximum of three months full time, or part-time equivalent.
- Pre-approval of expenses required; retrospective applications will not be considered.
- Full-time placements involve a suspension of University enrolment and extension to award (depending on length and award arrangements). Students in receipt of an ESRC-funded stipend will continue to receive this during the placement period.
- Expenses of up to £1,000 per month for the duration of the placement may be covered to support the internship (e.g. for accommodation not covered by a studentship stipend, and travel).
- The scheme will also provide support for remote placements without travel costs via an extension of funding.
- Paid placements would normally involve a suspension of both student status and studentship award, rather than support through this scheme (your DTP Office can advise).
- The collaboration cannot be for the purposes of data collection or fieldwork required for your doctoral project.
- If you are a student in the UK on a visa (particularly a Tier 4 visa) you should discuss the options for undertaking a placement with the university's visa office, and ensure it aligns with any visa conditions.

Overview

The ESRC has provided funding to DTPs to support collaboration and Knowledge Exchange (KE) with non-academic organisations. Knowledge Exchange is defined as a demonstrable and meaningful two-way flow of information/knowledge that is of mutual benefit and provides added value to the working relationship between both parties.

Students may apply for support to collaborate with a non-academic organisation, if there is significant knowledge exchange involved. This will usually be carried out via a placement or internship arrangement. It might involve research that is related to your project, or working on a project that is of interest to you, utilises your research skills and might help you explore a potential career path in practice. For example, working on a policy relevant project that does not link directly to your PhD but where you use your skills to address a policy issue. Or collaborating with a business organisation to help them explore options to make their operations more socially and environmentally responsible. Placements should not be for the purpose of completing your own

fieldwork, and this scheme cannot provide a funding extension simply to support a job, it must meet the criteria for knowledge exchange.

Placements/internships can provide a variety of benefits to PhD students such as networking, the development of transferable skills such as communication, time management and report writing, and applying your research in a practical setting. Benefits for hosts include the opportunity to work with upcoming experts, have the insight of an external researcher who is up to date with the latest academic knowledge, and the generation of real outputs such as briefing papers, reports and evidence-based policy proposals.

Students may apply for support more than once during their studentship, but will not receive more than 3 months support in total. The principal supervisor must be in support and will need to confirm that by undertaking the placement, the final submission of thesis should not be delayed by any longer than the length of the placement. The student must have been offered the placement already (at least in principle), prior to applying for financial assistance.

The placement must be completed prior to a student's current fund end date. It should be for a minimum of one month and no more than three months (or part-time equivalent). Full-time placements will involve a suspension of University enrolment. For approved full-time placements that are unpaid, students will continue to receive their ESRC stipend even while their university status is suspended.

The DTP may approve an extension to a student's funding period equal to the amount of time to be spent on placement, depending on their award length. Please note that the total period of extensions on any award will not exceed 12 months, and the funding end date will not exceed the University enrolment period or thesis submission deadline.

Students are required to complete an end of placement report within three months of completing the placement.

Travel arrangements

Covid-19 Travel Guidance

Please note that placements would not be considered essential travel and so cannot be funded if there are FCDO or other UK Government travel warnings in place for the intended country or area.

Please ensure you have read your University's health and safety guidelines and policies relating to overseas travel. You should also check with your department for any University and Departmental risk assessment rules concerning travel, along with Foreign Office website for updates on the safety of overseas destinations at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad> and <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>.

The DTP cannot provide support for overseas visits if the UK Government or FCDO advises against visiting the country or area concerned. All overseas travel must be subject to a formal risk assessment and departmental approval, which may require additional consideration of COVID-19 risk. It is your responsibility to ensure that risk assessments are completed prior to your intended dates of travel. The DTP cannot approve any funding for activities for which the student's department/university body has not also granted risk assessment approval, in addition to being in line with FCDO or other UK Government guidance.

The visit should be covered by the travel insurance policy of the student's host institution. Please speak to your respective department/university body about this process.

Application Process

The DTP would normally have set deadlines throughout the year by which you would need to apply, which are published on the DTP website. However the process has been amended for the 2021-22 academic year due to the uncertainties related to the pandemic.

For 2021-22, applications will be dealt with on an ad-hoc basis as opportunities arise. We recommend you apply to the DTP Office for your home institution approximately 3 months before the proposed placement, to ensure time for consideration and to give yourself plenty of planning time. However, if an opportunity arises with less notice, please do still contact the DTP Office of your home institution for advice, as, in exceptional circumstances, we may be able to approve these. Any applications received within 1 month of the proposed activity may not be approved, so please get in touch regarding opportunities with less notice as soon as possible. In all cases, applications must be submitted prior to the start of placement, retrospective applications will not be considered.

Decisions for applications involving travel will not be finalised until the DTP office has received confirmation of an approved risk assessment. However, you may submit your placement application form to your DTP office for review ahead of receiving approval of your risk assessment, as we can review this whilst you await approval from your Department. Your DTP office will advise if they also require a copy of the assessment. If a grant is approved, funds will be distributed as per local practice at your home institution, and no further funding will be provided beyond the amount confirmed in the award letter. All expenses must be supported by receipts.

Ensure you have discussed the timing of the placement with your supervisor in relation to the progress of your studies and any formal programme assessments. On the application form, you should explain why you feel the timing is appropriate.

Details of placement/internship

The student must have been offered the placement already (at least in principle), prior to applying for financial assistance and relevant supporting documentation should be submitted with the application.

Students must indicate whether the placement is paid or unpaid, so that the level of financial support can be adjusted accordingly. If the placement pays more per month than the ESRC stipend, payment of the studentship will be suspended for the relevant period.

University status

Please note that approval of an application and any subsequent extension to your studentship relates only to your funding arrangements, and will not affect your University status and deadlines. Any suspension of University status would be at the discretion of your Department (as per University procedures), so please discuss this with them before you submit an application.

Completing the application form

When completing your application, think of it as an opportunity to practice grant-writing skills. You must make a strong case, demonstrating careful planning and investigation of cost options to ensure value for money.

Summary of Proposed Activity

Students should provide details on the placement, including information about the organisation and position offered.

Level of Funding Requested

Provide estimates of the costs you expect to incur that are above those usually covered by your funding arrangements, e.g. travel costs and accommodation. The costs of the visit should be reasonable and dependent on the country, time period and activity proposed. The maximum that can be provided for expenses is up to £1,000 per month for the duration of the placement. If you are not requesting support for expenses that you will incur as a result of the placement, e.g. when conducting a placement remotely, you may leave the budget section of the form blank. In that case, you will be applying only for an extension of your award for the duration of the placement.

You must provide evidence to support your cost estimates and amounts requested, e.g. printout from a price comparison website etc. For overseas travel, you must have travel insurance approved through the relevant scheme at your institution, rather than request support through the internship scheme.

For students with fees-only ESRC awards, the DTP Office will take into account the full funding arrangements when determining the grant, including the estimated level of support available for living expenses if a funding extension is approved.

Case for Support

In the application, the student should provide a statement indicating what they hope to gain from the placement, and how it is relevant to their research or development as a researcher. They should also explain how it will be of benefit to the organisation.

The DTP will be considering how your application shows value for money therefore you should ensure you justify the cost estimates listed, particularly if they are not the most cost-effective options.

Any Other Relevant Information

Please list anything further that you may feel is relevant for consideration of your application.

Supporting documentation from organisation

A signed letter from the host organisation must be included with the application which outlines the following, along with any other relevant information:

- How the placement/internship will be of benefit to the organisation, focussing primarily on the expected two-way flow of knowledge between the student and organisation, with substantive user engagement on both sides, and how this will be achieved.
- Start and end dates
- Terms and conditions of the placement

- Rates of pay