



RCUK Policy Internships Scheme

Guidance for applicants

A three-month internship opportunity for RCUK-funded PhD students to gain experience of how research can inform policy making.

Closing Date for Applications: 16:00 BST 01 September 2016

About RCUK 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 several public bodies and learned societies. Within parliaments, research-based issues permeate all areas of work but most MPs and Peers do not have a background in research and look to others for specialist advice and information.
2. Research Council (RC) Policy Internships Scheme provides an opportunity for PhD students funded by the UK Research Councils 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.
3. The success rate for the RCUK Policy Internship Scheme is approximately 38% with RCUK funding approximately 70 internships by annual competition across all current internship hosting partners. Examples of work that previous interns have contributed to during their policy placement can be found [online](#).

Eligibility

4. This scheme is open to Research Council-funded students and applicants must state their Research Council on their application form.
5. To be considered as a Research Council-funded student, and therefore to be eligible to apply to the RCUK Policy Internship Scheme, applicants must be in receipt of a minimum of 50% funding from a single Research Council. For any queries related to your funding status, please contact your training grant administrator.
6. RCUK students on Tier 4 visas must consult with their appropriate University Faculty to confirm whether they would be eligible to undertake an internship before applying. In addition, these students should also ensure that their intended hosting institution is permitted to accommodate their internship against any institutional eligibility criteria. Further guidance is included within the RCUK Policy Internships Scheme Host Partner Information Document, but it is advised that students contact the relevant host should they have any queries.
7. All internships must start before the end of your funded period of study as well as fulfilling any Research Council specific criteria as appropriate (see “**Funding**”). All internships must be completed by the end of the 2017 calendar year.
8. Internships are available at seven partner institutions (*Listed alphabetically*):

- [Centre for Science and Policy](#)
- [Government Office for Science](#)
- [National Assembly for Wales Research Service](#)
- [Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology \(POST\)](#)
- [Royal Society](#)
- [Scottish Parliament Information Centre \(SPICe\)](#)
- [The Royal Society of Biology](#)

9. Further information about these organisations, the internship opportunities available, organisational eligibility by RC and contact details for hosting partners are available in the RCUK Policy Internships Scheme Host Partner Information document.

ESRC-funded Students Only

10. For ESRC-funded students **ONLY**, internships are available at additional partner organisations.

11. Additional information concerning these organisations can be found on the ESRC website (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/rcuk-policy-internship-scheme/>). These organisations are:

- [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy \(BEIS\)](#)
- [Cabinet Office](#)
- [Home Office](#)
- [Public Health England](#)
- [Scrutiny Unit](#)
- [Sentencing Council](#)

Application eligibility

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

13. Applicants wishing to undertake an internship at POST, the National Assembly for Wales or 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 within the application form, please complete this section as though your application is being made to your first choice hosting partner.

14. Some host organisations may require additional documents to be submitted alongside the main application. Should a host require any additional information this will be stated alongside their host information.

Funding

15. The funding mechanism used to support policy internships is determined by the applicant’s Research Council. These have been summarised below for students of each Research Council:

AHRC students¹: If the student is funded through a DTP or CDT training grant, the AHRC expects the award holder to continue paying the student their stipend during the internship, as well as any travel and/or subsistence costs incurred. The studentship must also be extended for three months to accommodate this internship. The internship opportunity will be supported as part of the Student Development Fund (SDF).

For students funded through CDA, BGP or BGP;CB awards, the AHRC expects the award holder to continue paying the student their stipend during the internship as well as any travel and/or subsistence costs incurred. The AHRC will agree reimbursement terms with the award holder for the costs associated with the internship. The studentship must also be extended for three months to accommodate this internship.

NERC, EPSRC, and STFC students: the funding Research Council will expect the award holder to continue paying the student their stipend during the internship as well as any travel and/or subsistence costs incurred. The funding Research Council will agree reimbursement terms with the award holder for the costs associated with the internship. The studentship must also be extended for three months to accommodate this internship.

ESRC students: The required costs (stipend extension, travel and accommodation where required) can be accessed through the ESRC Doctoral Training Centre (DTC). The studentship must be extended by three months to accommodate the internship. The host organisation will contribute £3,000 towards the costs of the internship and will make this payment directly to the DTC.

BBSRC students: Applicants undertaking a DTP studentship will have their internship funded as their PIPs internship. Applicants from the CASE scheme will have their internship supported from funds within their training grant.

MRC students: The required costs (stipend extension, travel and accommodation where required) 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.

16. All computing, email and other facilities necessary to complete the policy internship will be supplied by the host organisation.

Working arrangements

17. Successful applicants are expected to spend as much time as possible working in the organisations' offices. The Research Councils are keen to encourage applicants from all over the UK. For those successful applicants who are not within reasonable travelling distance of the host organisation, travel and accommodation costs are to be covered as described under "**Funding**".

18. All host organisations are strictly non-partisan – applicants will be expected to abstain from any party political or lobbying activity and to uphold the principles of parliamentary / public service, including a commitment to confidentiality, during their internship.

Start date and length of internship

19. The internships are for three months and will usually start in the first half of 2017. Following confirmation of award, the host institution will agree a start date with the

¹ If the student is not sure which type of award they are funded from, please speak to the Research Organisation in the first instance.

applicant, the applicant's supervisor and University/Institute. Students are able to undertake an internship at any point in the 2017 calendar year at a time agreed between these parties.

20. Successful applicants who are based in the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, the Government Office for Science, the National Assembly for Wales or the Scottish Parliament will be required to undergo security vetting before they can start their internship.
21. Changes to the start date must be agreed between the applicant, the host organisation, the applicant's supervisor and University/Institute.
22. Successful applicants are not permitted to delay the start date of their policy internship so that it begins following the end of their PhD award.

Guidance for Completion of the Online Application Form

23. Applicants must submit a completed [online application form](#). The form must be approved by their primary supervisor and Research Council Training Grant holder before it is submitted. It is possible to save and return to the form as you go through. Unfortunately, it is not possible to save or print a copy of your submitted application – therefore it is recommended that you save a copy of each page as you go along if you wish to keep an electronic copy of your final application.

As part of the application, applicants upload three documents which must be in Microsoft Word or PDF format:

- A CV (this should be no longer than 2 pages long and must include your education and employment history for the last 3 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 related to your PhD research topic.
24. The summary policy briefing should be no longer than 2 sides of A4 in Arial size 11 font. The policy briefing should be relevant to current issues, legislation and / or government policy. Note that the summary briefing is not intended to be as long or exhaustive as an actual policy briefing, but you should use the document to demonstrate your ability to write in a style suitable for a policy-making (rather than academic) audience and organise the content accordingly.
 25. Applicants must submit the online application form by **16:00 BST 01 September 2016**. Any application that is incomplete (**including all the necessary attachments**), or does not meet the eligibility criteria, will not be considered.

Assessment

26. Assessment is via a two-stage process:

- i. **Written applications**

27. Submitted online application forms will be assessed by representatives from the host organisation.

28. 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

Hosting organisations will notify individual candidates who are unsuccessful at the written application stage - Please note that unfortunately, host organisations are unable to provide feedback at this stage.

Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to stage two:

ii. Interview

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

30. Interview panels will consist of representatives chosen by the host organisation.

31. Further details will be provided to applicants who are successful at the sift stage by the host partner.

End of internship feedback

32. At the end of the internship, students will be required to complete a Student Feedback Form detailing their work over the three months and the outcomes achieved. This form will be circulated to all successful applicants upon acceptance of their internship.

Timeline

- 2016 RCUK Policy Internship Scheme Open: 04 July 2016
- 2016 RCUK Policy Internship Scheme Closing Date: 01 September 2016
- Sift period: September 2016
- Applicants notified of sift outcomes: By end of September 2016
- Interview period: October to mid-November 2016
- Successful applicants informed by: end of November 2016
- Successful applicants received award letters: December 2016
- Internships Commence: from 01 January 2017

Contacts and further information

33. Any queries relating to the application process should be directed to the NERC Studentships and Training Awards Group (stag@nerc.ac.uk) or the host organisation.

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

35. Please note that neither the Research Councils nor the host organisations will be able to advise on the strengths or weaknesses of individual proposals.