



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 10 August 2017

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. The Research Councils UK (RCUK) 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, or equivalent piece of work.
3. The RCUK Policy Internship Scheme is competitive with a success rate of approximately 38% across all applications. Examples of work that previous interns have contributed to during their policy placements can be found [online](#). For the 2017/18 competition round, there are approximately 100 internship places available.

Eligibility

4. This scheme is open to Research Council-funded students and applicants must state the Research Council(s) funding their doctoral studentship on their application form.
5. To be considered as a Research Council-funded student, and therefore 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 are NOT eligible to apply to the RCUK Policy Internship competition at this time as a condition of their visas. This issue is beyond the control of the Research Councils but, for further information, please contact your appropriate University Faculty Office.
7. Research Council funded EU students are eligible to apply to the RCUK Policy Internship 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. Please see the Hosting Partner Information Document for further information on security requirements and ensure you discuss security clearance requirements with your preferred internship organisation well in advance of submitting an application.

8. Part-time RCUK-funded students are eligible to apply to the competition. However, not all hosting 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. Hosting partners will assess part-time applications on a case-by-case basis with the final decision resting with the internship organisation. Please contact your preferred hosting partner in the first instance to discuss the options available before applying. If successful, part-time students will have their funding and submission date provided/extended on a part-time basis, i.e. for a 0.5 FTE student, 3 month equivalent of stipend would be paid over 6 months and the PhD funding end date would also be extended by 6 months.
9. 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 2018 calendar year.
10. Internships are available at 23 partner institutions (*Listed alphabetically*):
- Centre for Science and Policy (CSAP)
 - Department for Education
 - Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
 - Food Standards Agency
 - Government Office for Science (GoS)
 - Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)
 - HM Courts & Tribunals Services
 - Home Office
 - Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
 - National Assembly for Wales Research Service
 - Natural England
 - Northern Ireland Assembly (RaSe)
 - Northern Ireland Housing Executive
 - Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)
 - Public Health England
 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency
 - Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe)
 - Scrutiny Unit
 - Sentencing Council
 - The Royal Society
 - The Royal Society of Biology (RSB)
 - WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme)
 - Youth Justice Board for England & Wales
11. Further information about these organisations, the internship opportunities available and contact details for hosting partners are available in the accompanying RCUK Policy Internships Scheme Host Partner Information document.

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 Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology (POST), the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RaSe), 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 within the application form, please complete this section as though your application is being made to your first choice hosting partner.

Funding and Travel and Accommodation Expenses

14. Internships are financially supported by the Research Councils and hosting partner organisations.
15. For all students, PhD stipend and fees must continue to be paid by your Research Organisation as normal throughout your three month internship period.
16. For the 2017/18 RCUK Policy Internship Scheme onwards, internship hosting organisations have agreed to provide a co-funding contribution to meet students travel and accommodation costs arising from the internship up to a maximum limit of £2,400.00. 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 your training grant holder and internship hosting organisation after being offered a placement but prior to undertaking your internship.
17. 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, travel and accommodation costs up to a maximum limit of £2,400.00 arising from internships at one of these four organisations should be claimed from other sources, such as your training grant.
18. Confirming the mechanisms to reimburse students for travel and accommodation costs of up to a maximum limit of £2,400.00 for the duration of the internship are the responsibility of the training grant holder and internship hosting organisation to discuss and agree (i.e. this could be paid directly to the student or the student could be reimbursed from the training grant).
19. Please note, all expense claims must adhere to the [Research Council Travel, Subsistence and Expenses Policy](#).
20. Research Organisations and Hosting Organisations are strongly encouraged to ensure timely reimbursement of expenses so students are not left out of pocket during their internship. If required to, upon completion of your internship please email your completed expense claim form (which can be found in the Next Steps for Successful Applicants Document) to your Research Council. Once received, the Research Councils will reimburse the hosting organisation and University eligible expenses.
21. All computing, email and other facilities necessary to complete the policy internship will be supplied by the host organisation.
22. If you are eligible and currently receive a London allowance stipend supplement, you will continue to receive this London supplement for the duration of your internship, regardless of internship hosting partner location.
23. If you are ineligible and do not currently receive a London allowance stipend supplement, you will not qualify for this London supplement, regardless of internship hosting partner location.

Additional costs arising from undertaking an internship within London are to be met through the internship Travel and Accommodation allowance.

Working arrangements

24. 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 not within reasonable travelling distance of the host organisation, travel and accommodation costs are to be covered as described under "**Funding**".
25. All host organisations 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. Successful 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 you have any questions concerning this, please contact your intended hosting partner for further information.
26. There are currently no official guidelines or conditions with regards to taking annual leave during your RCUK policy internship placement. Students are encouraged to undertake their internships full time for the 3 month internship period however, if any annual leave does need to be taken within this time, this should be arranged between yourself and your line manager at your hosting partner institution. Any annual leave should not negatively affect your internship experience, quality of the work or workload.
27. Part-time applications are welcomed. However, not all hosting partners are able to accommodate part-time students and will therefore be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the internship organisation (see "**Eligibility**"). Please contact your preferred hosting partner in the first instance to discuss the options available before applying.

Start date and length of internship

28. The internships are for three months and will usually start in the first half of 2018. Following confirmation of award, the host institution will agree a start date with the applicant, the applicant's supervisor and University/Institute. Students are able to undertake an internship at any point in the 2018 calendar year at a time agreed between these parties.
29. Changes to the start date must be agreed between the applicant, the host organisation, the applicant's supervisor and University/Institute.
30. 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

31. 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.
32. 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 your written application. 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 directly related to your PhD research topic but instead should be relevant to current issues, legislation and / or government policy.
33. Please note, any attachments uploaded to Formstack using the save and resume function will **not** be saved until the form is submitted. Therefore, users should not any attachments until they are ready to submit.
34. The summary policy briefing should be no longer than 2 sides of A4 in Arial size 11 font **excluding** references and/or diagrams. Please include your full name and title of policy briefing in the document header.
35. 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.
36. The online application form will automatically close at **16:00 BST 10 August 2017**. 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

37. Assessment is via a two-stage process:
- i. Written applications**
38. Submitted online application forms will be assessed by representatives from the host organisation.
39. 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
40. Hosting organisations will notify individual candidates who are unsuccessful at the written application stage by end of September 2017 - Please note that unfortunately, host organisations are unable to provide feedback at this stage.
41. Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to stage two:
- ii. Interview**
42. The interviews will take place at a location decided by the host partner.

43. Interview panels will consist of representatives chosen by the host organisation.
44. 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 2017 then please assume you have been unsuccessful.

End of internship feedback

45. At the end of the internship, students will be required to complete an RCUK Policy Internship Feedback Form detailing their work over the three months and the outcomes achieved. The feedback form can be downloaded from the [RCUK website](#) and should be returned via email to researchcareers@nerc.ac.uk.

Timeline

- 2017 RCUK Policy Internship Scheme Open: 19 June 2017
- 2017 RCUK Policy Internship Scheme Closing Date: 10 August 2017
- Sift period: August-September 2017
- Applicants notified of sift outcomes: By end of September 2017
- Interview period: October to November 2016
- Successful applicants informed by: end of November 2017
- Internships Commence: from 01 January 2018

Contacts and further information

46. Any queries relating to the application process should be directed to the NERC Research Careers Team (researchcareers@nerc.ac.uk) or the host organisation.
47. Further information about the host organisations, including relevant contacts, can be found in the RCUK Policy Internships Scheme Host Partner Information document.
48. Please note that neither the Research Councils nor the host organisations will be able to advise on the strengths or weaknesses of individual proposals.