



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



PGR Placements and Knowledge Exchange Projects Guidance

All NWCDTP PhD scholarship holders are eligible to apply for financial support to undertake placements and other knowledge exchange projects, in collaboration with external partners, within the period of their scholarship. These projects are an integral part of the PhD experience, adding value to it by supporting research impact, professional development, career opportunities, and as such need to be carefully planned into the programme from the early stages of the PhD.

Summary

The scheme supports AHRC-funded doctoral researchers to collaborate with non-University partners through placements and other Knowledge Exchange projects during their PhD's funded period.

Collaboration opportunities are available with a number of NWCDTP partner organisations as well as with partners chosen directly from doctoral researchers to deliver projects of their own design through our Researcher-led strand.

Visit our [dedicated webpages](#) to know more about current opportunities and read about previously completed placements and KE projects.

Coronavirus

PGRs planning a placement should follow their own local University's guidelines on Covid in relation to fieldwork, placements and events and make sure they comply and address relevant risk factors in the risk assessment analysis to be submitted as part of their online application form (see section below on How to apply).

Eligibility

Eligible Applications – The scheme is open to all AHRC funded postgraduate researchers (including fees-only funded PGRs) currently in reception of a scholarship and still eligible for a funding extension (funding for each PGR is maximum 4 years FT - or PT equivalent - from the start of the PhD). Placements are carried out during the funded period of the PhD.

Eligible Organisations – All non-University organisations, within the UK or overseas, are eligible to be partners. In line with AHRC guidelines, this can include museums and archives attached to, or owned by, Universities, but these must not be part of the core business of the university from which the

applicant is applying from. For example the Whitworth Gallery, as part of the University of Manchester, is not an eligible placement host for a University of Manchester PGR, but it would be for a Lancaster University PGR.

Eligible Projects – The placement may or may not relate to the applicant's PhD topic and expertise, but it should be clear that the project is a separate activity from fieldwork, which is instead an integral component of the research to be presented in the thesis, for example for data collection (there is a separate [funding stream](#) within the NWCDTP for fieldwork support). The application must highlight how the opportunity brings value to the partner, how it aligns with their strategic needs, and how it is beneficial to the applicant's professional development and career aspirations.

Funding

Placement funding – Placements are financially supported through an extension to the scholarship, for a duration equivalent to the length of the project (full time equivalent), up to the maximum funding allowance for each researcher which is set by the AHRC at 4 years from the start of the PhD. For example, if your current funding end date is 30 September 2023, your 3-month full time placement (or 6 months part time) will result in a 3 month funding extension, bringing your new funding end date to 30 December 2023. This means that applicants will continue to receive their stipend and/or fees grant throughout the placement period. Please note that we do not fund placements that occur in the final 3 months of your awarded period, which means that your funded placement will have to be completed 3 months before your current funding end date (See Eligibility section above). The additional scholarship funding will be added to your funding allowance once the placement has been completed and final reporting has been submitted (See reporting requirements section below).

Please note that placements do not constitute grounds for an extension of the PhD's submission due date, which the AHRC sets at 4 years from the start date of the PhD programme (for PT PhDs, this is four years FTE from the start of the award).

Additional expenses – Where necessary, applicants can also claim for reasonable travel and accommodation costs incurred during the placement. This applies equally to fees-only funded doctoral researchers. Normally, these extra funds will be paid as reimbursement after the project, unless a case is made for their liquidation before the project's start, for example for travel tickets. If you wish to request support for additional expenses, you will need to complete a [Student Development Fund \(SDF\) form](#), once the placement has been approved. Please Note: If the project is located in the North-West, the NWCDTP will cover travel costs between home and the partner HQ only to the extent that these costs exceed the cost of travelling to your HEI home institution. For National/International schemes, you can claim for additional expenses only if these are not already covered within the main scheme.

Duration

Placements normally last **1 to 3 months full time (or any part time equivalent)**. Projects longer than 3 months full time (or part-time equivalent) will only be accepted under exceptional circumstances and applicants should build a case for this. We suggest that PGRs complete their initial 3 month FT

placement period first, with review of outcomes and project closure, before requesting an extension for a further period, which will require the definition of new objectives and project schedule, in collaboration with the partner and the support of the supervisor.

Similarly, PGRs can decide to complete more than one different placement projects, if their funding allowance permits it and if this has advantages for enhancing career prospects and professional development.

The Placement Scheme is designed to be flexible and cover any schedule arrangement agreed between the researcher and the partner. For example, a 3-month funding extension can support a project that requires a workload of 12 weeks full time to be completed, but that is arranged on a part time basis over a 24-week period, with the researcher dedicating 2.5 days per week to the project.

However, funded placements will need to be scheduled carefully, to avoid the final 3 months of the awarded period (See Eligibility section above).

How to apply

All applicants are required to complete the online [PGR Application Form](#), at least two months before the intended start date for the placement. The form will prompt the applicant to upload relevant documentation, after the relevant strand has been selected – *Partner-led, Researcher-led or Other National/International Placement scheme*. Please read the information on the [website](#) and the Guidance document before applying.

You will need to upload a statement of support from your main supervisor to the online form, particularly in relation to PhD progression and the benefits of the opportunity to the applicant's professional development. Guidance on format and points to consider can be found in the relevant section of the *PGR Application Form*.

Applications will be assessed by a panel constituted by the NWCDTP Placements and Partnerships Officer and the NWCDTP Funding Manager. Applications may be approved, rejected or returned to the applicant with a request for further information.

Researcher-Led placements

Applicants to the **Researcher-led strand** will also be asked to:

- Upload a complete *Project Definition Document* with details of the project, to be completed by the partner in collaboration with the researcher. Please use [SMART goals](#) when listing the outcomes of your project. When the project is connected to a scheme already existing at the partner organisation, please add a link to their website (e.g. a research residency scheme offered by the partner);
- A statement of support from the partner, as prompted in the application form. Guidance on format and points to consider in the statement can be found in the section 'Information about your Project' in the *PGR Application Form*.

If you would like to start a Researcher-Led placement but need support in getting started with the project idea and/or partner relationship, you can draft a [Placement Proposition Form](#) and send it to

the PPO who will be able to advise and support you in the ideation and starting of your placement idea. This process should start at least 6 months before your desired project starting date.

Other National/International Placement Schemes

External placement schemes usually require a direct application to the external organisation offering the placement. A list of these opportunities is available on the [NWCDTP website](#) but PGRs can source their own placement opportunities anywhere in the world.

We offer bespoke support and detailed feedback on draft applications to support PGRs to maximise their chances of success to external schemes. You can write and/or request a call with the PPO for advice and support.

If successful in securing a place, applicants will be required to complete the online *PGR Placement Application Form* – selecting ‘National and International Placement scheme’ at the beginning of the form – in order to secure funding from the AHRC/NWCDTP, or support with expenses. Major international schemes, such as the AHRC International Placement Scheme or the Cabinet Office Internship scheme, require you to access a scholarship funding extension from your DTP.

Once the funding has been confirmed, researchers will need to work with the partner to complete a *Project Definition Document* (we will send you this via email once the funding has been confirmed) or another project planning tool used by the partner to clarify details of the project, deliverables and a schedule.

Researchers who hold a National/International Placement place will need to follow the same guidelines set up in this Guidance Document, including those regarding reporting requirements. All applications require a statement of support from the main supervisor, particularly in relation to PhD progression and the benefits of the opportunity to the applicant’s professional development.

When to apply

We recommend planning for placements in the early stage of the PhD. An ideal time for placements might be the second year or start of the third year, but each PhD and PhD research is different, so you might have other preferences and priorities. We do not recommend and do not allow placements to be carried out in the final stage of your awarded period (final 3 months), which means that your placement needs to be completed 3 months before your current funding end date.

There are no deadlines to apply to the Researcher-Led placement scheme. It is however fundamental to apply with sufficient advance to the intended placement start date (three months at least, 6 if you are looking to go abroad and you need a VISA), especially since the pandemic started.

Partner-Led and **National/International** placement opportunities have their own timeframe, as advertised on a case-by-case basis.

Starting the placement

Once the placement has been confirmed, you will be sent a confirmation email with a link to an online “office space”, a library of documents where you will find relevant templates to be completed as your project progresses. To support the conversation with your partner and an agreement on project details at the start of the project, you and your partner will need to complete the following documentation:

- A [Project Definition Document](#) (PDD), where you and the partner set specific objectives for your project and a timeline to achieve them (if you are applying for Researcher-Led placement, you will submit this as part of the online application form; for other placement strands, you will submit them once your place has been confirmed);
- A [Case Study form](#) (Section 1 and 2), which we will use for promoting your project, via NWCDTP networks and social media.
- A [Placement Risk Assessment form](#), to be signed off by the partner (digital signature). During the Covid 19 pandemic, where travel and face to face activities are involved, an additional signatory from the applicant’s School will be required.

The processes used in the documents above derive from standard project management techniques, therefore the placement becomes a vital opportunity to strengthen skills in project design and management, impact definition and delivery, collaboration and co-creation, which are highly transferable to any following project or grant application, either in academia or industry.

Successful applicants will remain registered at their university throughout the placement period. It is expected that suitable supervisory arrangements will be made for the full period of the placement.

Review and reporting requirements

It is a condition of funding that placement holders regularly update the NWCDTP on progress and on final outcomes by sending the Placements and Partnerships Officer the following:

1. Mid-period: Submit a mid-period review on the progress of the project, referring to your PDD (max one A4 page on delivered outcomes to date and any changes to the plan of activities).
2. On project completion:
 - a. Complete the [Case Study form](#) (Section 3), within one month of completing the project, which has a focus on results and includes testimonials from all parties involved, which will be used for promotion and dissemination on the NWCDTP website ([Case Studies pages](#)) and associated social media, as well as other news and media channels as relevant. The form includes a final online survey for the Researcher and the Partner.
 - b. Submit a 250-500 word blog post on the placement (as part of the Case Study form) within one month of completion, which highlights the results but also the personal experience of the placement.

The funding extension will be processed once reporting documents have been received.

Communications and Engagement

Taking the time to develop a communication and engagement plan as part of your KE activity is advantageous for making the most of your placement, benefitting all parties involved - researchers, partners, funders, beneficiaries. As well as raising your professional profile, engagement and dissemination activities can help you to reach and engage your key audiences, support and evidence research impact, develop new partnerships for the future and gain external recognition of your work. For those choosing to develop a more comprehensive Communications Plan, as the basis to engage with targeted audiences, this is also a precious learning opportunity to develop essential skills which are highly transferable to any other type of research and project.

Please refer to our [Communicating your Research Toolkit](#) to find key steps, tools and best practice advice to effectively communicate and promote the value of your research and KE activities. Interested placement holders will be able to request bespoke support on drafting and delivering a Communication Plan as part of the Case Study form submission.

Withdrawal from a placement

If a placement holder, who has been accepted into the scheme, withdraws from a funded placement, and accommodation has already been paid for, the NWCDTP is entitled to claim back the costs of accommodation for the remainder of the placement period. For example, if a doctoral researcher leaves a placement after one month, and three months of accommodation have been paid in advance, the NWCDTP will claim back the equivalent of two months' rent.