 

**Framework for Student Placements**

**Introduction and Context**

In line with the AHRC’s strategic objectives, the Doctoral Training Partnership offers all students the opportunity to undertake a placement (or ‘internship’ or ‘residency’) with a non-HEI organisation – for example, a business, a museum, an NGO, a think-tank. We encourage all students to give serious consideration to taking advantage of this opportunity. Placements are funded in the form of an extension to the programme, so that time spent on the placement is not at the expense of your PhD project.

Subject to the NWCDTP’s standard approval process, placements may be undertaken with any non-HEI organisation. The NWCDTP currently has ten strategic partner organisations designated partner organisations, which are mainly based in the north-west: HOME; FutureEverything; Science and Industry Museum; Tate Liverpool; BBC; Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archives; Opera North; FACT, Manchester City Council, the British Library and the National Trust. These organisations are particularly well placed to receive students on placements, but students should certainly not feel limited to these organisations. Some national independent research organisations advertise PhD placement schemes which are also very suitable for DTP students.

**Conditions**

*Eligible Organisations*

In principle, any non-HEI organisation, within the UK or overseas, may provide a placement. Subject to confirmation from AHRC, this can include university-owned museums such as the Manchester Museum and the Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool (or indeed museums attached to other universities elsewhere in the UK). A placement associated with the core business of a university (e.g. attached to a research institute) would not be permitted. The exception to this is that international placements may include HEI organisations.

*Relationship to the PhD Project*

The placement project must not be an integral part of the PhD project, for otherwise it would not be eligible for an extension to the studentship. With that caveat, the NWCDTP would encourage you to devise a placement that draws as far as possible on your own expertise, in subject-matter or research methods or both. This is not to exclude placements unrelated to your research expertise, but we would expect you to be able to articulate a rationale in terms of the benefits to your own career development.

*Duration*

The length of the placement may be determined according to the needs of the student and the host organisation. The minimum permitted length of a placement is 20 days. The maximum is 120 days. These are working days, and equate to one month and six months working 5 days per week. In some cases it may be most convenient to take the placement as a solid block – especially if you wish to undertake a placement with an organisation based outside the north-west. But it is equally possible to undertake a placement on a part-time basis, perhaps spreading a 40-day placement across four months, and this model has the advantage of allowing work on the thesis to continue during the placement period. It can be in any organisation (within the UK or overseas) which can provide students with a stimulating and supportive environment to carry out a project which is of relevance to their research.

*Approving and Initiating the Placement*

NWCDTP students may select one of the placement opportunities that are advertised on behalf of the NWCDTP partner organisations or an organisation whose objectives are consistent with those of the consortium Universities. Alternatively, students may also propose a placement that would be of particular value to them as part of this scheme. The placement may:

* Align directly with the student’s own research or
* Provide an exceptional opportunity to work with a non-HEI organisation.

In cases where the student submits their own placement proposal, this will be assessed by the NWCDTP Director. Criteria for approving the placement may include:

* The placement content being at an appropriate level for a PGR student;
* Ensuring that working hours required are realistic and, where the placement is being carried out on a part-time basis, compatible with the student’s programme of study.
* The duration of the placement is appropriate and will not detrimentally affect the student’s ability to meet the completion date.
* The placement is taking place in an eligible organisation.

*Funding*

The placement is funded in the form of an extension to the studentship. Thus, a student who undertakes a three-month full-time placement will benefit from a three-month extension to the doctoral programme, with payment of stipend and fees. Please note that the AHRC and the NWCDTP will still require the PhD thesis to be submitted within four years from the start date, and this is not affected by the extension to the studentship .

Fees-only students are not eligible for payment of a stipend from NWCDTP during a placement, but are eligible for an extension to fees for a period commensurate with the placement and discretionary expenses may be paid. If you receive a stipend from another source, e.g. your own institution, you will need to check with that funder whether they will agree to an extension of your award.

If you are offered a paid placement, you are required under AHRC rules to suspend your studentship for the duration of the placement.

If undertaking the placement entails significant additional costs (e.g. travel, short-term accommodation, materials), there is provision for these to be claimed via the Student Development Fund.

End-of Placement Report

It is a condition of placement funding that within one month of the completion of the placement you submit a report on the placement. These should include text which we can use on our website and elsewhere for the benefit of future students and placement hosts.

**Appendix 1: Further Guidance on Placements**

**Purposes of the placements**

PhD placements can serve several different purposes: some but not necessarily all of these will apply to your case:

*For students*

* To give you a clearer sense of the relevance of your research skills beyond the academy.
* To give you transferable and professional skills through workplace in an environment in which your research experience is relevant.
* To enhance your skills in project design.
* To give you experience of the co-generation of knowledge as research questions are framed with academic and practitioner input.
* To enhance your employability by better the value of the skills you have acquired as a researcher.
* To enhance your experience of communicating research findings in a non-academic environment.

*For host organisations*

* To produce high-quality pieces of research, shaped by the organisation’s own priorities and conducted by a highly qualified researcher.
* To enhance their sense of the benefits of co-production of knowledge.
* To enable them to help shape academic research agendas.

**What might a placement consist of?**

PhD students have in the recent past undertaken placement projects of the following kinds. Obviously this is by no means exhaustive:

* Research in archives or collections;
* Oral history projects;
* Organisational history
* Running educational workshops
* Display or exhibition preparation
* Catalogue and archive work
* Evaluation and review
* Preparation of educational resources
* Training programmes
* Event organisation

**Securing the placement – a checklist**

* Discuss with supervisors(s) your ideas for a placement.
* Research a suitable organisation for your placement. What does the organisation need? What can it offer? Listen to the organisation. Find out about its history, structure, aims, and resources.
* How might you, as a researcher, assist the organisation fulfil its aims?

Write 400 words:

Your background and your research

What do you want to do?

Why this organisation?

What will you contribute to the organisation?

A schedule.

What resources will you need?

* Send this to a named contact, ideally someone you’ve already talked with, at the potential host via email.
* Complete the placement approval form.

**Carrying out the placement – key principles**

* Stick to your schedule
* Carry out the tasks assigned
* Stay in contact with your contact without excessive dependence
* Agree a schedule of updates or reports
* Be friendly and efficient
* Document your work

**Supervisors’ input**

Supervisors are encouraged to take an active role throughout the placement by maintaining supervisory contact even during a full-time placement, and encouraging the student to submit progress reports. Collaborative links formed during a PhD placement can be a springboard to further collaboration (e.g. collaborative doctorates), so the academic supervisor is encouraged to establish contact with the placement supervisor.

**Issues to keep in mind**

* You will be dealing with busy organisations working with limited resources and wary of incurring extra time-consuming responsibilities. While most want to work with universities, you will need to clarify which skills and knowledge that you are bringing to the placement and the benefits that the non-HEI organisation will gain.
* Would your proposed placement fit with the non-HEI organisation’s programme of work?
* What are your objectives and proposed outputs from the proposed placement.
* What resources from the non-HEI will you need?
* How long do you want to spend on the placement and do you want to do this on a full-time or part-time basis? If the latter, how much time each week do you envisage spending with the non-HEI partner each week?
* Time spent building trust is well spent. Establish what your shared interests are.
* Time spent agreeing what you will do (and changing your plan if necessary) is well spent.
* Adopt a stance of curious enquiry rather than expert coming with a solution.
* Listen to your host’s professional language and use it or explain your vocabulary so that communication flows easily.
* Consider carefully at what stage of your research you undertake a placement. Early on it can contribute to your methods and methodology, later on it can contribute to dissemination and career plans.
* Be realistic about what you can achieve in the time.
* Have you achieved a balance between intellectual rigour and getting a job done?

**Appendix 2: Placement Application Form**

**Appendix 3: Model Contract**