

ESRC SOUTH COAST DTP INTERNSHIP: GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

The ESRC-SCDTP Internship programme enables SCDTP students to undertake internships for up to 3 months during the course of their PhD. The processing of internships has recently been devolved by the ESRC to individual DTPs.

The ESRC-SCDTP has allocated funding to provide two 3-month studentships per year. This number may be increased dependent on the periods of internships awarded and if any co-funding is provided by host organisations.

Why do an internship?

There are many positive reasons for doctoral students to undertake internships. Whether you plan to stay in academia or are aiming for a non-academic role, employers are increasingly looking for postgraduates with well-rounded skill sets. An internship can provide evidence to use on CVs and in interviews to demonstrate a broad range of skills and experiences which go beyond the area of PhD of research. An internship can be an opportunity for postgraduates to understand their research in a wider context and consider new career ideas. They can also be a chance to travel, experience different regions and cultures and trial living in new areas of the country/world.

A key component of a SCDTP funded internship is to engage in knowledge exchange. Placements are within a professional environment where doctoral students can build bridges between academia and external organisations to influence policy and practice. Ultimately an ESRC funded internship will embody a two-way flow of information that provides benefit to both parties.

Finding an internship

The ESRC-SCDTP is currently investigating several potential organisations where internships could be arranged. However, this does not prevent students from identifying organisations with whom they may wish to arrange an internship. Should you wish to arrange your own internship you should discuss this with Dr Athina Vlachantoni (SCDTP Deputy Director, Impact & Collaboration) at the earliest opportunity (a.vlachantoni@soton.ac.uk).

ESRC-SCDTP Guidelines

Students are able to undertake an internship at any time during their PhD studies, but the internship must commence at least three months prior to the official PhD funding end date. Students on the 1+3 funding scheme may be considered to undertake an internship no earlier than the summer before their PhD starts.

Internships can last from 1 – 3 months; they can be done on a full or part-time basis, and with more than one placement provider.

Due to the knowledge sharing component of this internship programme, students cannot undertake a placement within a university or research institute. However, approval may be given for internships that aim to increase the impact of the research, for example through communication and policy-related activities. It is important that students source placements that are relevant to their PhD subject, so that a demonstrable level of knowledge exchange can take place.

Internship funding

For full-time internships, during which the students' PhD programme is suspended, students will receive an extension to their studentship for the same duration as their internship. Students who hold a Tier 4 visa, and who wish to take on a full-time internship, may be required to travel to their home country in order to suspend their studies and visa. Alternatively, students on such visas may be able to take on a part-time internship alongside their full-time PhD studies. If you want to discuss this more, please contact the SCDTP Manager (scdtp@soton.ac.uk).

Travel and accommodation expenses can be claimed during a full-time internship, up to a maximum of £1,000 per month. All claims for expenses must be supported by appropriate documentation. Students can request an advance payment of predicted expenses if necessary. This should be discussed with the SCDTP Manager (scdtp@soton.ac.uk).

Application to carry out an Internship

Applications will be accepted and considered throughout the year, however we recommend applying at least 4 months before the internship would be due to start.

During this process it is vitally important that you speak with your academic supervisors about suitable times to undertake an internship, they may even have ideas or contacts you can use. Your application will also require a letter of support from your supervisors highlighting the benefits that will arise from you spending up to 12 weeks as an intern during the specified period.

You will then need to work with your placement provider to create an Internship-Plan which will be signed by you and the employer. The form will be reviewed by the SCDTP Directors before funding is approved.

If you have already secured a placement independently, all you need to do is email your Letter of Support and Internship Plan to the SCDTP Manager (scdtp@soton.ac.uk) so that the placement can be considered for funding.

After the internship

A condition of receiving ESRC funding is that students provide feedback on their internship experience, and to describe their experience in a blog as part of the SCDTP Blog. Students will be required to give detailed feedback on their placement and demonstrate from a knowledge exchange perspective the skills they gained and shared through the experience. Considerable value is placed on the feedback as it helps to develop and improve the internship programme.

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