

Internships

SUPER PGRs are encouraged to undertake an internship during their studies to support their personal development and career prospects.



About

- Internships can be based in the UK or abroad and usually involve working on a defined project or piece of research-based work for a host organisation outside of academia. This could be with a parliamentary/governmental department, non-governmental organisation (NGO), learned society, the voluntary sector, consultancy, industry, or other organisations.
- Opportunities can be related to a PGR's research topic or can be completely unrelated. Both offer the chance to broaden experiences and gain valuable transferable skills.
- Internships offer benefits to both PGRs and host organisations in enabling a two-way exchange of knowledge, skills, and experience, and a valuable means of bridging academia with policy and practice.

Timings

- Internships are generally 3 months in duration but can last anywhere between 2 weeks and 6 months.
- Internships can be undertaken on a full or part-time basis, with interns generally expected to spend at least 50% of their time with the host organisation.
- The end of second year of a PhD tends to be good time for considering an internship, but the timing is not prescriptive and will differ according to the needs of the individual PGR and aspects of their studies (e.g., fieldwork, lab work, teaching commitments, etc.).
- PGRs should discuss suitable timings with their supervisors and should bear in mind that it can take several months to set up an internship. It is therefore recommended to start planning/applying at least 6 months ahead of an anticipated start date.

Finding an internship

- PGRs can either apply to a competitive opportunity or set up their own internship with an organisation. Some may have a placement factored into their studentship with a Collaborative or CASE partner.
- SUPER [advertises competitive opportunities](#). Organisations offering recurring opportunities include [UKRI](#), [Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology \(POST\)](#), [UK Government Open Innovation Team](#), [Fauna & Flora International](#), [European Marine Board \(EMB\)](#), [The Biodiversity Consultancy](#), [UK Associates of the Bermuda Institute of Oceans Sciences](#), [The Crown Estate](#), [British Ecological Society \(BES\)](#), [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#), [Environment Agency](#), [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), [Bright Green Business](#), and [Ecological Survey & Assessment \(ECOSA\)](#). Short fixed-term vacancies are often advertised by [RSPB](#), [the Wildlife Trusts](#), [NatureScot](#), [Scottish Invasive Species Initiative](#), [Seafish](#), and [the Civil Service](#) (e.g., JNCC, DEFRA, Cefas, Marine Management Organisation, Forestry Commission).
- PGRs can source their own internship opportunities by defining what they are looking for and approaching relevant organisations. The list of [SUPER associate partners](#) is a useful reference for possible organisations to contact.
- Some tips when reaching out to an organisation include, be professional at all times, write a succinct paragraph introducing yourself, research the organisation and what is current within their sector, and use this to put forward some clear ideas for potential internship projects that are aligned with the company activities. Find out who would be best to approach within the organisation, as a speculative application addressed to a specific individual is much more likely to be read and is easier for you to follow up on.

- SUPER can help to approach organisations to arrange a placement for a PGR. Supervisors may also have established contacts who have offered internships in the past, or who might be open to offering an internship.

Logistics

- PGRs can opt to either:
 1. undertake an internship as part of their PhD without suspending their studies and continue to receive stipend/fees. This is usually only considered if the internship is integral to the studentship and will contribute to their thesis; or
 2. suspend their studies, and therefore suspend stipend/fees, whilst completing the internship. This allows time to focus on the placement and to be immersed in the work of the host organisation. The thesis submission date would then be extended by the same duration as the internship.
- SUPER PGRs can access £1,600 [from their TSG](#) to facilitate internships regardless of suspension status, for example to cover travel and accommodation costs. Though, if an organisation provides a salary, PGRs should suspend their studies. Any additional costs associated with the internship will need to be borne from external sources.
- PGRs who hold a Tier 4 visa may only be able to undertake a part-time internship alongside their full-time PhD studies, unless the placement forms an essential part of their research. PGRs should refer to guidance on the [UKCISA website](#) and check their visa circumstances.
- PGRs should discuss the options with their supervisors and University before making any firm commitments, considering the financial implications of undertaking an internship, including any terms related to additional funded time.
- When a PGR initially starts at an organisation, they should make sure that they are provided with an induction, a suitable working station, and that both parties understand their roles and responsibilities, including the best way and time for them to contact their line manager. Matters to raise and discuss might include confidentiality and non-disclosure, expenses, health and safety, intellectual property, core hours, remote working, etc.
- PGRs should ensure that they understand the intended outcomes of the internship required by the organisation and any associated deadlines. It may be beneficial to have these in writing, agreed upon by their line manager.

Returning to studies

- PGRs are asked to provide feedback on their internship experience and to reflect on the skills gained and shared through the experience. Case studies can be found [on our website](#).
- PGRs are encouraged to record any transferrable skills developed and experiences gained through their internship as credits for [the PG Cert](#).

Benefits

Internships undertaken as part of the SUPER DTP are intended to generate mutual benefit between PGRs and host organisations and to enhance the quality or impact of research.

For SUPER PGRs:

- Internships are a fantastic learning opportunity; the chance to apply research knowledge in a working environment and to enhance professional skills.
- Undertaking an internship can provide a valuable new perspective and context for doctoral research as well as the opportunity to develop networks outside of academia and to explore potential future collaborations.
- Whether you plan to stay in academia or to seek employment elsewhere, completing an internship can help you to stand out when applying for positions. Employers are increasingly looking for a well-

rounded skill set, and an internship can help demonstrate knowledge, skills, and experiences which extend beyond the area of doctoral research.

- The transferable skills gained through internships could include communication, time management, leadership, and team working, which are all valuable for future career paths.
- The personal and professional development achieved through internships can contribute valuable credits towards [your PG Cert](#).
- Within the MASTS/SUPER Graduate School, many internships have led onto further work or career opportunities with the host organisation.
- Internships offer the chance to gain useful knowledge about organisations and how they operate, learn about a field from the inside, and explore a potential career path whilst strengthening your CV.

For host organisations:

- SUPER PGRs have secured highly competitive [UKRI-NERC](#) studentships and have excellent research, analysis, communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills to bring to an internship project. PGR profiles and their research areas can be found on our website: [Cohort 1](#), [Cohort 2](#), [Cohort 3](#), [Cohort 4](#), and [Cohort 5](#).
- PGRs can bring a fresh perspective and new ideas to your organisation and can help to link up policy and practice with academic knowledge.
- Internships are flexible and can be tailored to meet your organisational needs in terms of the subject area, placement activity, timings, and duration (usually 1-3 months).
- PGRs can be tasked with either delivering a specific piece of work or contributing to an ongoing project. This could involve research, policy analysis, evaluation work, report writing, or other activities.

For further information, or if you should have a query on internships, please email superdtp@st-andrews.ac.uk.