

Placement Scheme Guidance

Applicants must read the Guidance as you complete the Placement Scheme Application Form. The Northern Bridge Consortium (NBC) Academic Directors may reject any application failing to follow the guidance.

NORTHERN BRIDGE CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL
TRAINING
PARTNERSHIP



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

Key Points to Note

You are advised to apply well in advance of, and at least three months before your proposed placement start date.

A single placement can be no less than 4 weeks and no more than 26 weeks in duration (or the part-time equivalent).

More than one placement can be taken during the studentship. The total number of placements cannot exceed more than 26 weeks (or the part-time equivalent).

Placements must start before the final six months of the studentship. Proposed placements starting within the last six months of the studentship at the time of application will not be considered.

You may, with the agreement of your host organisation and your supervisors, propose an alternating model of 3 weeks on placement, followed by 1 week of study.

We cannot consider “fractional” placements, for example, 1 day a week over several weeks.

There is no provision for supervision and working on the thesis during the period of a full-time placement. If a proposed placement is full-time, you must state how you plan to avoid disrupting the progress of your studies.

The studentship will be extended by the length of the placement, as illustrated below. However, the thesis submission date is **not** extended.

We do not anticipate that part-time award-holders will undertake full-time placements.

International award-holders are not permitted to undertake full-time placements due to visa restrictions, and must seek advice from their institution’s visa or immigration specialists before agreeing to any optional placement/work experience opportunity.

Example Working Patterns (for further information, see “Acceptable Working Patterns”, pg. 5)					
Studentship Start Date	Current Studentship End Date	Mode (FT/PT/ Alternating)	Calendar Length of Placement	Length Based on Working Days	Revised Studentship End Date
<i>Example: Proposed Placement Dates 1 January 2024 to 10 March 2024:</i>					
1 October 2022 (FT)	31 March 2026	Full-time	10 weeks	10 weeks	9 June 2026
<i>Example: Proposed Placement Dates 4 March 2024 to 08 December 2024:</i>					
1 October 2023 (FT)	31 March 2027	Part-time (50% full-time equivalent)	40 weeks	20 weeks	18 August 2027
<i>Example: Proposed Placement Dates 3 February 2025 to 3 August 2025:</i>					
1 January 2023 (FT)	30 June 2026	Alternating (at 5 days per week when on placement)	26 weeks	20 weeks (75% = 19.5 weeks, rounded up)	17 November 2026
<i>Example: Proposed Placement Dates 1 January 2024 to 10 March 2024:</i>					
1 October 2021 (PT)	30 September 2028	Part-time (50% full-time equivalent)	10 weeks	10 weeks	9 December 2028

Aims and Objectives of the Placement Scheme

The NBC is committed to providing you with the widest range of opportunities to:

- Apply your knowledge, skills and research in **non-academic** environments;
- Gain new skills and competencies that complement your postgraduate research and training; and
- Generate impact from your research and share the knowledge you have developed with non-academic actors and audiences.

To help achieve these objectives, the NBC runs a Placement Scheme. Some placement opportunities are proposed by outside organisations. These are advertised to all Northern Bridge award-holders. However, our placement scheme is responsive and supports you to design your own placement, tailored to your specific research, training and career development needs.

The following principles underpin the Scheme:

- It is student-led: you are empowered to develop your own placement(s), working in partnership with your supervisory team.
- It is responsive: you have the opportunity to apply at any time during the academic year (though, as noted above, not in the last six months of your PhD candidature) for funding and the NBC seeks to support innovative proposals in the most supportive way possible.

You and your supervisory team are encouraged to actively explore possible placements with appropriate non-HEIs. Advice may be sought at any time from the NBC Academic Director and your local NBC Administrator at your host university.

Definitions of Terms Used in this Guidance

- Your “**host university**” is the university at which you are registered.
- Your “**local NBC Administrator**” is the administrator or equivalent based at your host university, whose contact details are listed below. Your local NBC Administrator is your first point of contact for queries.
- The **NBC Academic Directors** are members of academic staff appointed at each of the seven partner universities of the Northern Bridge Consortium: Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Queen’s University Belfast, University of Sunderland, Teesside University and Ulster University.
- A **Non-HEI** is a non-higher education institution – essentially, a non-university or non-academic body that hosts a placement.

Conditions for Funding a Placement

The Scheme can only be used to fund a proposed placement if you are actively registered at your host university.

The Scheme can only be used to fund a proposed placement if the start date is prior to the final six months of your studentship at the time of application.

The Scheme cannot be used to fund a proposed placement if your funded period has come to an end, if your thesis has been submitted, or if your registration / studentship has been suspended.

Funding is not available for any activity taking place prior to the commencement of your studentship award.

You must be on course to submit your thesis by your latest thesis submission date, as confirmed by your most recent Annual Progress Review (or equivalent). There is no provision for supervision and working on the thesis during the period of a full-time placement. If a proposed placement is full-time, you must state how you plan to avoid disrupting the progress of your studies. Your supervisor(s) is also required to submit a statement of support commenting on the plans to avoid disrupting the progress of the thesis.

You may submit multiple applications to the Scheme. More than one placement can be taken during the studentship. However, the total number of placements cannot exceed more than 26 weeks (or the part-time equivalent).

A single placement cannot be less than 4 weeks in duration.

Retrospective funding is not permitted under any circumstances. Applications to the Scheme submitted for activities that have already taken place will be rejected without consideration.

If a placement is not directly part of your PhD programme (i.e. to be undertaken for purely personal reasons), or you will receive a payment for the placement, then the studentship must be suspended. The AHRC does not expect you to receive stipend as part of an AHRC-funded studentship if you will be earning money for a placement or internship that will cover the same basic costs.

Is your Host Organisation Eligible?

Any **non-HEI** (or non-academic) organisation, based in the UK or abroad, in either the public, private or third sectors, can host a placement funded via the Scheme. However, proposed placements at organisations where it is apparent that your existing skills will be used for commercial or financial gain with no clear opportunity for further skills development will not be considered.

Universities and other organisations designated as a Higher Education Institution (HEI) are **not eligible** to act as a host organisation, with the possible exception of museums, galleries, and cultural venues owned or managed by a University.

Acceptable Working Patterns

- Full-time
- Part-time – approximately 50% of the full-time equivalent.
- You may, with the agreement of your host organisation and supervisors, propose to follow an alternating model of 3 weeks on placement, followed by 1 week of study, i.e. 75% of the calendar length of the placement to be spent on placement, 25% on study.

We are unable to consider alternative working patterns to those listed above, including “fractional” placements of, for example, 1 day a week over several weeks. The length of the subsequent studentship extension will be calculated by the NBC Management Team at Newcastle University and confirmed with your local NB Administrator.

Example patterns are listed on page 2.

We do not anticipate that part-time award-holders will undertake full-time placements.

Due to the restrictions on the number of hours that international students can work, **international award-holders cannot undertake full-time placements**. If you are an international award-holder, you are eligible for a placement on a part-time basis only and to the number of hours permitted by the conditions of your visa. You must seek advice from your institution’s visa or immigration specialists before agreeing to any optional placement/work experience opportunity.

Although permitted, in practice we would not encourage you to take part-time placements in a single block of 52 weeks and would instead encourage part-time placements of no more than 26 weeks.

Available Financial Support – Your Studentship Extension and Eligible Costs

You will continue to receive your standard stipend for the duration of the placement commensurate with your registration at your host university (full-time or part-time).

Your **studentship** will be **extended** by the length of the placement on a *pro-rata* basis, i.e. a part-time placement of six months will result in a three-month extension to your studentship.

However, it is the policy of the AHRC that the **thesis submission date** is **not** extended by the length of any placement undertaken. This is non-negotiable with one exception: where, at the time of the extension to your studentship, your thesis submission date is the same as the end date of the funded period. In this case, the thesis submission date will be amended to ensure the due date is not before the funding end date.

The NBC and the relevant internal department with responsibility for the payment of stipend and tuition fees will arrange for any subsequent extension to your studentship.

The NBC will consider funding **one return journey to and from your placement**, but not normally the costs of repeated return visits to your home during the course of your placement. However, on a case-by-case basis, we will consider additional travel in exceptional circumstances, for instance, where a part-time award-holder has caring responsibilities.

The cost of any person travelling with you is not eligible for funding.

The NBC will consider **funding local travel in order to undertake business directly related to your placement** (e.g. an archaeological site visit), but not what will normally be considered the regular commute to and from the host organisation's main place of business.

Where **relocating** may be required (because the placement is more than 50 miles from your normal place of residence), **you can apply for rented accommodation costs**. You must provide evidence of the general cost of rented accommodation in the area. The NBC will **not** fund full-time accommodation costs for part-time placements; a proportionate contribution may be made at, normally, 50% of the estimated rate.

The NBC **will not fund subsistence or utility bills**. These costs must be met from your standard stipend.

"Contingency" funds are not eligible and will **not** be considered. All costs must be specific.

It is not necessary to include the stipend and fees costs associated with an extension to your studentship on your application form.

Applying for Funding – Completing and Submitting the Application Form

All sections of the application form must be completed, and the form should be typed. Incomplete forms will be returned to you without consideration.

Electronic signatures are permitted.

You are encouraged to seek supplementary sources of funding, such as travel bursaries, though must make clear what other sources and amounts of funding have been identified, if any. You will not be penalised if no supplementary sources of funding are available.

You must ensure that all costs incurred are reasonable and in line with your **host university's own Travel and Expenses Policy**. Contact your local NBC Administrator for guidance. This may include, for example, the requirement to book travel via your university's own travel services provider.

All costs must be **fully itemised**, converted to sterling where applicable, and as accurate an estimate as possible based on current prices. You must evidence your estimates with, for example, a copy of screenshots or quotations for your chosen travel routes, identified accommodation, etc.

Completed application forms must be submitted to the local NBC Administrator at your host university. The list of contacts is provided below.

The application form should be named using the following convention:
Award Holder Surname + Initial_HostUniversity_Placement_DateDDMMYYYY
e.g. SmithJ_QUB_Placement_30062026

The following documents must accompany your application form:

- Compulsory: Evidence to support your estimated costs
- A Risk Assessment (if applicable, see below)
- Compulsory: A letter of support from the host organisation
- Compulsory: A supporting statement from your supervisor

Applications received without the supporting documents will be rejected without consideration.

Where the primary supervisor is not available, applications may be supported by another member of the supervisory team.

You may submit multiple applications to the Scheme, but priority will be given to students who have not previously received funding via the Scheme.

There is no maximum amount of funding that can be requested in a single application to the Scheme, but the NBC Academic Directors will consider the reasonableness of the estimated costs. The cost of a placement will also be considered (and in all likely offset against) any further, future funding bids to NBC.

You must seek approval for any additional costs that arise during a placement, (for example, opportunities not foreseen at the application stage, or resulting from an emergency) by making a request by email to your local NBC Administrator at the earliest opportunity. Approval of such requests is not guaranteed. Claims for such additional costs that have not received prior approval by the NBC will be rejected.

Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment form should accompany applications to the Placement Scheme for ALL overseas activities and where potential risks (such as working with hazardous materials) can be identified.

Please note: this Risk Assessment form does not replace any university-, school-, or department-specific Risk Assessment process. You may be asked to complete a separate Risk Assessment by your home institution if your proposed activities trigger local protocols. Funding approved by the NBC is considered provisional in these instances, and subject to the approval of internal Risk Assessment processes.

Travel to countries considered unsafe by the FCO is likely to be refused. You should consult <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> for the latest advice.

Allocation of Funds and the Source of Funding

The NBC allocates the funds that are at its disposal via an open, transparent and equitable process, which is focused on meeting the individual needs and priorities of its award-holders. To meet these objectives the available funds are pooled and managed directly by the NBC at the request of the AHRC.

No award-holder has a personal allowance to draw on; there is no per annum “voucher” scheme; there is no “remaining” amount due to an award-holder nearing the end of their funded period. Award-holders are eligible to apply for funding via the appropriate NBC schemes, but have no access to such funding by right.

In order to control the budget, a notional allowance is used by the NBC Academic Directors to establish an individual threshold. Spending is monitored to ensure that no individual award-holder exceeds the notional allowance associated with a studentship and which therefore encroaches on the allowance notionally attached to another studentship.

The NBC is obliged to select the most eligible applications for support, based upon an award-holder’s case for support, which must be clearly stated in an application to a scheme.

Assessing and Deciding Applications

Received applications are checked by the local NB Administrator to ensure you are eligible for funding under the terms and conditions of the Scheme.

Applications are then reviewed by the Placement Scheme Sub-committee in conjunction with your evidence to support the stated estimated costs; the letter of support from the host organisation; the supporting statement from your supervisor(s); and the Risk Assessment, if applicable:

Applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- **Contribution towards your training.**
How closely does the proposed placement support your training and development needs?
- **Support and facilities provided by the host organisation.**
What support, facilities and resources will you benefit from whilst on placement?
- **Impact and knowledge exchange.**
What impact is the placement anticipated to generate for the host organisation and/or more widely, and how will you support and effect exchange of knowledge between you and the host organisation? The NBC must be satisfied that both you and host organisation have clear expectations of your roles during the placement, and the placement will be mutually beneficial to both of you.
- **Career development.**
How will your employability and career prospects benefit from the placement?
- **Ethical and practical considerations.**
Have the ethical or practical issues affecting the proposed placement been properly addressed?

The Placement Scheme Sub-committee must be satisfied that:

- any related health, safety and security issues have been properly considered and addressed;
- the placement will not have any detrimental effect on the timeline for completion.

The Placement Scheme Sub-committee may seek advice and feedback on an application from other academic or administrative members of staff at the partner universities.

The Sub-committee meets each month to consider applications received in the previous month. It is anticipated that applications will be assessed **within four to six weeks of receipt**. You should bear this turnaround time in mind when applying for funding. You are advised to apply well in advance of, and at least three months before, your proposed placement start date.

Your local NBC Administrator at your host university will notify you when a decision has been made regarding your application.

Appeals under the grounds of *Procedural Irregularity* or *Misapplication of the Assessment Criteria* can be made in the event that an application is not approved.

When your Placement is Approved

Following notification of a successful application, your host university will then follow its own institutional guidance for student placements, gaining the necessary authorisation for the placement to proceed. You may be asked to complete required documentation including, for example:

- Health and Safety Checklist
- Placement Approval and Risk Assessment
- Placement Learning Agreement
- Permission to undertake a period of “outside study.”

Should institutional authorisation for the placement not be gained, your application will be deemed to be invalid and therefore cancelled.

Dispersing, Accessing and Reimbursing Approved Funds

Where funds are approved, payment will take place by one of the following means (dependent upon your host university's own procurement and expenses policies):

- a) **In the majority of cases:** you will purchase the service(s) and submit receipts to your local NBC Administrator so that reimbursement may be arranged. You must therefore be prepared to make the initial outlay.
- b) In **exceptional** cases, where the approved amount far exceeds a single stipend payment, an advanced payment **may** be made directly to you in line with the host university's own policies. This may not be possible in all partner universities. Following the submission of receipts, if your costs are found to be less than the amount advanced to you, repayment will be requested.

It is not normally possible to pay or reimburse more than the approved amount.

Where you require reimbursement, you must complete the appropriate claim form of your host university and provide receipts/proofs of purchase in line with the requirements of your university's own Travel and Expenses Policy.

Reimbursement claims must be made in a timely manner, usually no more than 3 months after the activity has taken place.

Only your host university can reimburse you.

Funding is approved on condition that you may not change any detail of an approved application for funding without prior approval by the NBC. If the approved funding is no longer required, you must inform your local NBC Administrator.

Terms and Conditions

While you are on placement, you will remain registered at your host university and should continue to engage with your studies as set out in your case for avoiding disruption to your progress. You must continue to undergo an Annual Progress Review according to the cycle determined by the start date of your PhD.

You will not be employed or have any form of contract of employment with your host organisation; however, you may be required to sign a non-disclosure and/or confidentiality agreement to comply with your host organisation's data protection requirements.

A Placement Agreement between your host university and host organisation may be prepared and entered into prior to the commencement of an approved placement and following Health and Safety authorisation. This legal agreement will detail the roles and responsibilities of each party to the placement, confirm the facilities and support that will be provided to you, and cover issues such as insurance coverage whilst you are at the host organisation, and intellectual property (IP).

Placement Changes or Terminations

Any changes to an approved placement must be reported to local NBC Administrator at your host university at the earliest opportunity, but will not usually require the resubmission of an application.

Should you be required to terminate your placement earlier than planned for any reason you must inform the NBC Administrator at your host university immediately. Following notification of the termination the local NBC Administrator and Academic Director will liaise with you to complete the termination, make any financial adjustment necessary and help ensure your doctoral studies are not adversely affected.

Monitoring and Reporting

At the end of the placement, you are required to complete and submit a report detailing the skills and experiences you have gained, together with details of the work you conducted and any resulting impact generated from the placement. These reports must be submitted to: northernbridge.admin@newcastle.ac.uk within one month of the placement being completed. Reports will be reviewed by the NBC Academic Directors. The information provided by you in your report may be used by the NBC to publicise the Scheme externally and the NBC's wider activities, and you may also be invited to participate or present at future NBC cohort events and seminars.

Further Information

The AHRC's Guidelines for the use of funding, to be followed by Research Organisations is available at: <https://www.ukri.org/publications/training-grant-funding-guide/>

Local NBC Administrator Contact Details:

Durham University	northernbridge.admin@durham.ac.uk
Newcastle University	northernbridge.admin@newcastle.ac.uk
Northumbria University	northernbridge.admin@northumbria.ac.uk
University of Sunderland	graduate.school@sunderland.ac.uk
Teesside University	research@tees.ac.uk
Queen's University Belfast	northernbridge.admin@qub.ac.uk
Ulster University	northernbridge.admin@ulster.ac.uk

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