

## **FAQ on PhD Placements with the Cabinet Office Open Innovation Team**

### **Will PhD students near the end of their PhD be considered for placements?**

PhD students need to retain their student status up to and including the start of their placement with the OIT. Due to the number of placements which have already been arranged, the usual waiting time between an initial application and a student taking up a placement is around six months (this can be even longer due to the requirements of security clearance — see below).

This means that if an application is made to us shortly before a student is due to submit their thesis, and it is likely that they will have passed their viva prior to the start of a placement, they will not be able to take up the placement.

Unfortunately, we have limited flexibility on this point — we take students on a secondment basis, and without student status, we would be required to formally hire them, with all the procedures and regulations associated with that.

### **Will all students, regardless of nationality, be considered for placements with the OIT?**

We will endeavour to take on all successful candidates, regardless of their nationality. However, we are also required to obtain security clearance for all our placement students. This can be a drawn out and complicated process, over which we have no control, and will often take longer for students on Tier 4 Study Visas (i.e. those from non UK or EU countries). There are also some countries which, for national security reasons, are unlikely to be granted security clearance at all.

While we do not want to discourage applicants from a diverse range of countries from applying, please be aware that a longer period of time should be allocated for their security clearance to come through, and please allow at least nine months for clearance in these cases.

### **Do students require funding in order to be eligible for placements at the OIT?**

We cannot offer unpaid internships. Students will need to secure funding from their research council, doctoral training partnership, university or other suitable source.

We also ask that funding for the duration of the placement be set at or above a student's normal monthly funding for their PhD — no student who takes a placement with OIT should be left out of pocket as a result of that decision. Where students are doing a PhD part-time, the funding during their time at OIT should be adjusted pro rata if the arranged placement is full time.

### **Are travel expenses covered?**

While we hope to be able to provide funding to facilitate students who do not live near London to cover transport and/or accommodation expenses in the future, at present we are unable to do this. We would ask that you consider these expenses when funding students.

### **Are part-time placements possible?**

PhD students doing their courses on a part-time basis will be considered for OIT placements, in line with the days allocated for the completion of their PhD. However, we cannot currently

provide support for any additional travel or accommodation expenses incurred as a result of a part-time placement.

**Will reasonable efforts be made to accommodate students with disabilities and/or special circumstances?**

We will endeavour to accommodate any prior commitments or circumstances that could affect a PhD student's ability to take up a placement. This could include:

- Prior academic commitments, such as attendance at workshops or conferences
- Childcare commitments
- Part-time work commitments (see above)
- Disabilities or health conditions

The Cabinet Office encourages flexible working patterns and working from home.

**How long is a typical placement with the OIT?**

Placements are normally full time for three months. However, six month placements are also possible, dependent on circumstances.

**Does completing a placement affect the amount of time students have to complete their PhDs?**

No — it is normally the case that students will receive a deferment equivalent to the duration of their placement, effectively extending the time they have to complete their PhD.

**What kind of work will PhD students be doing during their placements, and will it align with the subject of their PhDs?**

PhD students will be expected to undertake a wide range of work, of which the core is expected to be 2-3 projects with client teams. While these projects may occasionally align with a student's research interests, in general students will mostly work on projects with no direct connection to their PhD.

We have, on occasion, organised more specialised placements for students within other departments which do align with their research interests — this however will only be done if there is a demand within departments.

**What kinds of skills and opportunities are PhD students likely to obtain during their placements?**

Placements with OIT build on the transferable skills which many PhD students have already acquired, and help them develop these further and in new directions. These include:

- Synthesising large quantities of information about complex subjects
- Writing in clear and accessible prose for different audiences
- Orally presenting their work in engaging ways
- Managing multiple projects and tasks with changing priorities and deadlines.