

Placement Scheme Guidance

Applicants must read the Guidance as they complete the Placement Scheme Application Form. The NBCDTP Academic Directors may reject any application failing to follow the guidance.

NORTHERN BRIDGE CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL
TRAINING
PARTNERSHIP



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Aims and Objectives

The NBCDTP is committed to providing its award-holders with the widest range of opportunities to:

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

To help achieve these objectives, the NBCDTP runs a Placement Scheme. The Scheme is responsive and supports award-holders to design their own placements, which are tailored to their specific research, training and career development needs.

The following principles underpin the Scheme:

- It is student-led: Award-holders are empowered to develop their own placements, working in partnership with their supervisory team.
- It is responsive and flexible: Award-holders have the opportunity to apply four times during the academic year for funding and the NBCDTP seeks to support innovative proposals in the most flexible and supportive way.

Award-holders and their supervisory teams are encouraged to actively explore possible placements with the Strategic Partners of NBCDTP and other appropriate non-HEIs. Advice may be sought at any time from the NBCDTP Academic Directors.

Definitions

The award-holder's "host institution" is the University at which the award-holder is registered.

The "local NBCDTP Administrator" is the administrator or equivalent based at the award-holder's host institution, whose contact details are listed below. Their local NBCDTP Administrator is the first point of contact for award-holders.

The NBCDTP Academic Directors are members of academic staff appointed at each of the seven partner institutions of the Northern Bridge Consortium: Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sunderland, Teesside University and Ulster University.

Eligibility for Funding

The Scheme can only be used to support AHRC NBCDTP-funded doctoral students actively registered at their host institution.

The Scheme cannot be used to fund award-holders whose funded period has come to an end, whose thesis has been submitted, or whose registration / studentship has been suspended.

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

Applicants must be on course to submit their thesis by their latest thesis submission date, as confirmed by their most recent Annual Progress Review (or equivalent).

Award-holders may submit multiple applications to the Scheme, but can only receive funding for a placement or placements whose **total** duration is not more than 26 weeks during their funded period of study.

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

Any **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 the existing skills of the award-holder 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 are not eligible to act as a host organisation, with the exception of museums, galleries, and cultural venues owned or managed by a University.

A placement can be full-time (four days per week) or part-time (two days per week). It is expected that award-holders will spend one day per week working on their thesis. The award-holder is responsible for negotiating their working pattern and reporting it to the NBCDTP so that their studentship can be extended accordingly.

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 the applicant's PhD programme (i.e. to be undertaken for purely personal reasons), or the applicant will receive a payment for the placement, then the studentship should instead be suspended. The AHRC does not expect a student to receive maintenance as part of an AHRC-funded studentship if that student will be earning money for a placement or internship that will cover the same basic costs.

Financial Support

Award-holders will continue to receive their standard stipend for the duration of the placement.

The award-holder's **studentship** will be **extended** by the length of the placement. However, it is the policy of the AHRC that the thesis submission date is **not** extended by the length of any placement undertaken.

Award-holders may apply for:

- Travel expenses to cover one return journey to the placement if relocation is required.
- Local travel costs directly related to required day-to-day activities while on placement, for example, site visits.
- Accommodation costs of not more than £400 per month for placements more than 50 miles from the award-holder's normal place of residence. In exceptional cases, such as when placements take place in London or other high cost locations, the NBCDTP Academic Directors will consider awarding a higher rate for accommodation costs to reflect the higher living costs where this is clearly evidenced in the application form.

Placement Scheme funding cannot be used to fund subsistence or utility bills. These costs must be met from the standard stipend.

The NBCDTP and the relevant internal department with responsibility for the payment of stipend and tuition fees will arrange for any necessary changes to the award-holder's studentship.

Applying for Funding

All sections of the application form must be completed, and the form must be typed. Incomplete and handwritten forms will be returned to the applicant without consideration. Electronic signatures are permitted.

Award-holders are encouraged to seek supplementary sources of funding, such as travel bursaries, and must make clear what other sources and amounts of funding have been identified, if any.

Award-holders must ensure that all costs incurred are reasonable and in line with their host institution's own Travel and Expenses Policy. (See Annex 1 below.)

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.

Applications must be submitted to the NBCDTP Administrator at the award-holder's host institution by the deadlines of 31 October, 31 January, 30 April or 30 June for consideration by all NBCDTP Academic Directors. Late applications will not be considered.

In exceptional circumstances, "out-of-cycle" applications for funding will only be considered where the award-holder can provide written evidence with their application that they could not have known about the opportunity in time to submit an application by the preceding deadline, and the placement will start prior to a forthcoming deadline.

The application form and accompanying documents should be merged into one complete PDF document in the order stated on the application form and named using the following convention:

Award Holder Surname + Initial_Host Institution_Placement_Date DDMMYYYY
e.g. SmithJ_QUB_Placement_30062017

Failure to format the document correctly may result in a delay to its being considered or being returned to the applicant without consideration.

The application should be submitted from an institutional email account to the NBCDTP Administrator in the award-holder's host institution.

Applications received without a supporting statement from the award-holder's supervisor or the host organisation will be rejected without consideration. Where the primary supervisor is not available, applications may be supported by another member of the supervisory team.

Award-holders may submit multiple applications to the Scheme. But in accordance with the AHRC's recommendation, 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 cumulative total spend of an award-holder over the duration of the studentship is limited and monitored as described below.

Applicants must seek approval for 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 their local NBCDTP 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 NBCDTP will be rejected.

Allocation of Funds and the Source of Funding

The NBCDTP 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 NBCDTP at the request of the AHRC.

In the interests of transparency: the total fund comprises the equivalent of tuition fees plus stipend at the standard UKRI rate for six months (the “Student Development Fund”). The NBCDTP calculates a **notional** allowance per studentship. For example, the notional amount per studentship for award-holders beginning in the 2018/2019 academic year is calculated as follows:

£4,260/2 tuition fees +
£14,777/2 stipend =
£9,518.50 per studentship

(Note: The Student Development Fund also funds the Small and Large Grant Schemes.)

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 placement funding via the Scheme, but have no access to such funding by right.

In order to control the budget the notional allowance will be used by the NBCDTP Academic Directors to establish an individual threshold. Spending will be 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 NBCDTP is obliged to select the most eligible applications for support, based upon the award-holder’s case for support, which must be clearly stated in the application to the Scheme.

Award-holders are encouraged to ensure that all costs incurred are reasonable. In particular, travel should be by the most economical means available and should be by standard-class public transport except in exceptional circumstances.

Award-holders must clearly itemise and state in their application the amount of funding sought and endeavour to make as accurate an estimate as possible. If, in exceptional instances where advanced payment has been made, following the submission of receipts, the award-holder’s costs are found to be less than the contribution made, a repayment will be requested.

Assessing and Deciding Applications

Received applications are checked by the local NBCDTP Administrator to ensure they are eligible for funding under the terms and conditions of the AHRC’s Student Development Fund.

Applications are considered by all NBCDTP Academic Directors following the quarterly deadlines.

Applications will be reviewed in conjunction with the award-holder’s original NBCDTP Studentship Nomination and original Research Proposal; an up-to-date Research Plan; an up-to-date Training Needs Analysis; the latest Annual Progress Review report(s); the evidence provided to support the stated estimated costs; the letter of support from the host organization; and the supporting statement from the award-holder’s supervisor(s).

Applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- **Contribution towards the award-holder’s training.**
How closely does the proposed placement support the award-holder’s training and development needs?
- **Support and facilities provided by the host organisation.**
What support, facilities and resources will the award-holders benefit from whilst on placement?

- **Impact and knowledge exchange to be realised.**

What impact is the placement anticipated to generate for the host organisation and/or more widely, and how will the award-holder support and effect exchange of knowledge between themselves and the host organisation? The NBCDTP must be satisfied that both the applicant and host organisation have clear expectations of their roles during the placement, and the placement will be mutually beneficial to both.

- **Career development.**

How will the award-holder's 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 NBCDTP must be satisfied that any related health, safety and security issues have been properly considered and addressed. Travel to countries considered unsafe by the FCO is likely to be refused. Award-holders should consult <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> for the latest advice.

The NBCDTP Academic Directors must be satisfied that the placement will not have any detrimental effect on the timeline for completion.

The NBCDTP Academic Directors may seek advice and feedback on an application from other academic or administrative members of staff at the partner institutions.

It is anticipated that applications will be processed **within four weeks of receipt**. Award-holders should bear this turnaround time in mind when applying for funding. Award-holders are advised to apply well in advance of, and at least three months before, an intention to start the placement.

The NBCDTP Administrator of the award-holder's host institution will notify the award-holder and their primary supervisor when a decision has been made regarding their 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. (See Annex 2.)

Establishing Approved Placements

Following notification of a successful application, the award-holder's host institution will follow its own institutional guidance for student placements, gaining the necessary authorisation for the placement to proceed. Award-holders 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 "outside study."

Should institutional authorisation for the placement not be gained the application will be invalid and cancelled.

A Placement Agreement between the award-holder's host institution and host organisation will 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 the student, and cover issues such as insurance coverage whilst the student is at the host organisation and intellectual property (IP).

Dispersing, Accessing and Reimbursing Approved Funds

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

- a) **In the majority of cases:** the award-holder will purchase the service(s) and submit receipts to their local NBCDTP Administrator so that reimbursement may be arranged. Award-holders 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 the award-holder's bank account in line with the host institution's own policies. This may not be possible in all partner institutions. Following the submission of receipts, if the award-holder's costs are found to be less than the contribution made, a repayment will be requested.

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

Funding is approved on condition that the award-holder may not change any detail of an approved application for funding without prior approval by the NBCDTP. If the approved funding is no longer required, the award-holder must inform their local NBCDTP Administrator. Any changes to an approved placement must be reported to NBCDTP Administrator at the award-holder's host institution at the earliest opportunity, but will not usually require the resubmission of an application.

Where the award-holder requires reimbursement, they must complete the appropriate claim form of the host institution and provide receipts/proofs of purchase in line with the requirements of the host institution's own Travel and Expenses Policy. (See Annex 1 below.) Only the host institution can reimburse its award-holders.

Terms and Conditions

Whilst award-holders are on placement they will remain registered at their host institution and continue to interact and engage with their supervisory team. In addition, they will continue to undergo Annual Progress Review according to the cycle determined by the start date of their PhD.

Award-holders will not be employed or have any form of contract of employment with their host organisation; however, award-holders may be required to sign a non-disclosure and/or confidentiality agreement to comply with their host organisation's data protection requirements and a Placement Agreement between the award-holder's host institution and their host organisation will be entered into for all approved placements.

Placement Terminations

Should an award-holder be required to terminate their placement earlier than planned for any reason they must inform the NBCDTP Administrator at their host institution immediately. Following notification of the termination the NBCDTP will liaise with the award-holder to complete the termination, make any financial adjustment necessary and ensure the award-holder's doctoral studies are not adversely affected.

Monitoring and Reporting

During placements award-holders will maintain contact with their supervisory team, who will continue to provide support and guidance.

At the end of the placement, supported award-holders are required to complete and submit a reflective report (maximum 500 words) detailing the skills and experiences that they gained, together with details of the work they conducted and any resulting impact generated from the placement. These reports must be submitted to the NBCDTP Administrator at the award-holder's host institution within one month of the placement being completed. Reports will be reviewed by the NBCDTP Academic Directors. The information provided by award-holders in their reports may be used by the NBCDTP to publicise the Scheme externally and the NBCDTP's wider activities, and those award-holders may also be invited to participate or present at future NBCDTP 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://ahrc.ukri.org/skills/phdstudents/post-graduate-funding-training/training-grants-and-training-grant-funding-guides/>

Local NBCDTP Administrator Contact Details:

Durham University	northernbridge.admin@durham.ac.uk
Newcastle University	northernbridge.admin@newcastle.ac.uk
Northumbria University	researchsupport@northumbria.ac.uk
University of Sunderland	faci-research@sunderland.ac.uk
Teesside University	n/a
Queen's University Belfast	northernbridge.admin@qub.ac.uk
Ulster University	n/a

Annex 1: Estimating Your Costs and a Brief Guide to what is Eligible

*Award-holders should be aware that the reimbursement of expenses is subject to the Travel and Expenses Policy at their host institution **irrespective** of the source of their studentship funding. Expenses are **not** reimbursed by Northern Bridge Consortium administrators but by the appropriate institutional finance, payroll and expenses teams, who will have divergent processes and turnaround times. Failure to follow the local policy guidance may mean it is **not** possible to reimburse costs, even those approved by the NBCDTP.*

When completing an application for funding, please consider the following:

Travel and Accommodation

Travel should be by the most cost and environmentally effective means, having regard for:

- cost and value for money;
- reasonable comfort;
- time and duration of journeys (and connecting travel);
- requirement for flexibility of itinerary;
- our commitment to reduce carbon emissions;
- safety and wellbeing.

Travel should be booked as far in advance of the trip as possible to take advantage of lower prices. You should bear this in mind when preparing an application for funding and ensure it is submitted to allow yourself reasonable time to respond to any queries that Directors might have before making your arrangements. **No less than three months before you intend to travel** is recommended.

You must obtain competitive quotes and demonstrate value for money. The best possible route, taking into consideration the principles above must be evidenced by, for example, a quotation or screenshot of an online booking form.

For **rail travel** you should take advantage of all types of discounted tickets, including any discounts that may be obtained through the use of railcards, and travel by **standard class only**. Two single tickets are often cheaper than a return ticket, as is splitting journeys requiring multiple changes. Costs of railcards cannot be reimbursed.

Air travel within the UK is **not** permitted except where you can demonstrate that this is less costly overall, taking account of other costs such as accommodation. You should choose the lowest cost appropriate schedule taking into account the factors listed above. Air travel must be **economy** in all cases.

Hotels should be selected on a best value basis, choosing the most economically priced room available. Costs should not exceed the following nightly limits for **short-term** stays of usually **seven nights or less**, inclusive of tax:

- London or Dublin: £140.00
- Rest of UK and ROI: £100.00
- Rest of World: up to £165.00 and **in line with room rates** stated here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scale-rate-expenses-payments-employee-travelling-outside-the-uk>

A case can be made for the above rates for longer stays where an alternative such as renting is not possible or is considerably more expensive. In general, however, where stays **exceed seven days**, you should source economically priced accommodation through, for example, <http://www.universityrooms.com/>. We generally recognise the value for money provided by services such as Airbnb, but emphasise the need for award-holders to consider their safety, wellbeing and security. The use of such services and the accommodation offered should be fully considered.

You should take advantage of, for example, rates offered by conference hosts for discounted accommodation where available.

Items such as mini bar items, pay per view TV, telephone calls, etc., will **not** be reimbursed. Where these are included in the bill, the costs must be deducted prior to the submission of the receipt for reimbursement.

The cost of taxis will be reimbursed if this is the cheapest or most appropriate means of reaching your destination. For example, this may be when public transport is unavailable, either early in the morning or late in the evening, or where public transport would add significantly to the journey time, or in instances where you feel your safety may be compromised.

Local car hire on overseas visits can be considered in instances where award-holders are expected to visit numerous locations that are particularly difficult to reach by public transport. Mileage is eligible for reimbursement when using your own vehicle in the UK, providing it is more cost effective than public transport.

We will not meet the costs relating to a spouse/partner or other family members accompanying you, though they are permitted to do so. If you are submitting receipts which includes the costs of anyone travelling with you, you can claim your portion of the costs only.

We will **not** meet any additional costs where you might choose to extend your stay for personal reasons.

Other General Principles

- We do not permit payment of subscriptions to professional organisations and societies.*
- Childcare costs cannot be met.
- The costs associated with the care (kennelling, etc.) of domestic pets while on extended fieldwork, etc. cannot be met.

** In exceptional circumstances, where membership of a professional organisation will significantly reduce the cost of conference participation, reimbursement of a membership fee **may** be considered.*

Under no circumstances will the costs of **subsistence** be provided for except where these costs have been included in a package (for example, hotel bed and breakfast, and meals included as part of a residential training

package are acceptable; an optional conference dinner is not.) Please see below for the subsistence entitlement when participating at mandatory cohort development events.

Expenses Claims

Bookings must be made directly with the airline, hotel, etc., and not via a travel agent. You should not be influenced by any promotional incentives such as airline mileage credits, personal loyalty schemes, etc.

Claims can be submitted immediately after bookings have been made, and prior to the event itself. You do not have to have undertaken the approved activity before seeking reimbursement. Follow-up claims for approved costs such as internal travel during an activity can be made afterwards. That is, you can submit more than one claim against the same approved activity.

You must retain and submit **detailed original receipts** - without exception - as proof of purchase to support all expenditure. Printed copies of online booking receipts are acceptable. Costs that are not supported by a receipt will not be reimbursed.

The cost must be clearly visible on the printed receipt and costs stated on the claim form must match the receipts. If you are submitting receipts which includes the costs of anyone travelling with you, you must clearly indicate your portion of the costs only.

The purchased item must also appear clearly on the receipt. Credit or debit card receipts indicating a total only are not considered sufficient proof of expenditure and will **not** be accepted and cannot be reimbursed. Statements are not accepted as proof of purchase.

Under no circumstances should you pay any costs for a fellow award-holder and claim the total amount paid, even for smaller costs such as lunch. You should request your own individual receipt.

Subsistence can be reimbursed for mandatory NBCDTP cohort development events, such as the annual conferences. You are eligible to claim for the following where this has not been provided by the host institution:

- A daily allowance of up to a maximum of £9.30 to cover lunch and additional refreshments +
- One evening meal per day of the event, including soft drinks: £20.00

The cost of **alcohol** will **not** be reimbursed. **Gratuities** will **not** be refunded unless they are included on an itemised bill as a service charge and not as a voluntary addition by the award-holder.

Claims must be made one month following the completion of the activity to which the expenditure relates.

Unforeseen Increases in Costs

We appreciate costs can fluctuate between the submission of your application, approval and booking. Minor increases of a few pounds are acceptable and you are not required to seek additional approval to cover these. However, if the increase is significant, or you have any concerns about an increase in costs post-approval, please check with your local NBCDTP Administrator before you make a payment.

Annex 2: The Appeals Process

Applications for appeal must be submitted within 14 calendar days of the date on the application outcome letter. A late appeal is unlikely to be considered unless there is a strong reason for the delay.

Supporting documentation is required for the appeal. Award-holders must submit a letter detailing their reasons for appealing with their application, and a letter of support from their supervisor(s). As well as clearly addressing the reasons the NBCDTP Academic Directors have provided for the rejection of the application, award-holders can provide any evidence which was not available or considered previously.

Under General Data Protection Regulation, the NBCDTP is required to obtain your consent for an Appeal Adjudicator or members of an Appeal Panel to view the data you provide in connection with your appeal. By signing and submitting an appeal application, the award-holder is giving permission for all relevant staff to have access to their documentation.

To ensure impartiality, an appeal will be referred to a senior member of staff in one or more of the partner institutions in the NBCDTP, normally a Dean of Postgraduate Studies or equivalent. Their decision may take a number of weeks. Award-holders should be aware of the impact this may have on any potential bookings, travel arrangements, etc., that they intended to make as part of their original application. Award-holders are strongly advised not to make any arrangements until they receive the outcome of their appeal, as there is no guarantee the appeal will be successful.

Award-holders will be notified of the decision of the Adjudicator(s) by their local NBCDTP Administrator. Following the outcome there is no further channel for appeal against the outcome within the NBCDTP and award-holders will be referred to their host institution's own complaints procedures.

Definitions:

Appeals can be made on the grounds of *Procedural Irregularity* or *Misapplication of the Assessment Criteria*:

Claims on the grounds of Procedural Irregularity normally refer to administrative errors for which the award-holder must make clear the reasons for the belief that an error has taken place.

Claims on the grounds of Misapplication of the Assessment Criteria must include an explanation of in what way the award-holder feels disadvantaged on account of the alleged error, and in what way the award-holder feels the guidance, which accompanies the Schemes application forms, concerning the allocation of funds and assessment of applications has not been properly applied.

Version Control	
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Last Amended By	Sarah Rylance