

Research in Practice Placement FAQs

Welcome to the **Research in Practice Placement FAQs** for South Coast DTP students. This document provides essential information for students and supervisors about undertaking a placement as part of your doctoral training.

What is a Research in Practice Placement?

A Research in Practice placement is a three-month (or part-time equivalent) work-based learning opportunity with an organisation that can offer a suitable project which enables you to both apply your current research skills in a new context and develop any skills gaps identified as part of your [Development Needs Analysis](#).

Placements can be:

- With academic and non-academic (public, private or voluntary sector) organisations.
- Full-time or part-time.
- Conducted in-person, remotely, or in a hybrid format.
- Split between up to three placement hosts (minimum duration per placement is one month (or part-time equivalent)). The total time on placement must add up to 3 months (13 weeks).

Do I need to suspend my candidature to go on placement?

The Research in Practice placement is an integral part of your PhD training (as specified by the ESRC) **so there is no need to suspend your candidature.**

You will need to tell the Graduate School at your awarding university the dates when you will be on placement, and copy in the SCDTP Admin Team at scdtp@soton.ac.uk

I'm a Student Visa Holder, will going on placement affect my visa status?

The ESRC funding period now includes 3 months (or part time equivalent) for the Research in Practice placement.

The placement is an assessed part of your PhD training and meets the UK Home Office criteria.

However, your awarding University's Visa Team still need to communicate any change in study activity to the UK Home Office and provide them with details of your placement. It is therefore essential as a Student Visa Holder that you inform the Visa Team as soon as possible of your intention to go on placement (either within the UK or overseas), as well as providing them with the details they need before your placement starts.

Can I do the placement part time even if I am a full-time student?

You can do your Research in Practice placement on a full-time, part-time or flexible basis whether you are a full-time or part-time student.

The total time on placement must add up to 3 months (13 weeks).

Whether the placement can be done part-time will need to be discussed with the host organisation and will depend on when the project needs to be completed and the efficacy of doing the work across an extended timescale.

Doing a PhD is intense, and we encourage you to think carefully about balancing the level of work needed if you are thinking of doing your placement part-time whilst continuing to work on your PhD research.

When do I go on my placement?

When you go on your Research in Practice placement will depend on several factors and will be different for every SCDTP student.

As part of your on-going Development Needs Analysis, you will reflect on what skills you are looking to develop and the best placement opportunity and timing to help support that development requirement. You will also need to discuss with your supervisors the best time to go on your placement, depending on your PhD project commitments.

You can apply for your placement at any time within your candidature, with the following caveats:

- You should not do your placement within the masters year or first few months of the PhD, and you would normally need to have passed your first progression review.
- You will need to **complete** your placement at least 3 months before the end of your candidature (or 6 months if you are part-time).

We do encourage you to be flexible on the timing of your placement as opportunities may not coincide with your ideal timing. **Be open to flexing for the right placement opportunity.**

Can my placement be aligned with my PhD project?

Although the skills and networks you develop may be helpful for your PhD as well as your future career, you **cannot** use the Research in Practice placement to generate data for your PhD or use your PhD fieldwork site as your placement.

You also **cannot** be placed with your current supervisors or research team or in your home department.

Can I get a research publication from my placement?

Occasionally Research in Practice placements can generate sufficient academic knowledge to merit a research publication. Any plans for this would need to be discussed with your placement host and approved by them.

Remember that such publications may need ethics clearance for the research from the host institution (or institution of the lead author). It is more likely that you will be writing other forms of output such as service evaluations, policy briefs and public facing reports. Getting experience with writing for non-academic audiences is a common and worthwhile learning objectives for placements.

How do I find a Research in Practice placement?

There are many different types of organisation that would benefit from having a SCDTP student working on a placement project including:

- Non-academic organisations (e.g. government, local councils, private sector, NGOs, charities)
- Academic institutions or research centres
- University professional support services
- Research Assistant Internships on standalone academic projects

The Research in Practice team will frequently present opportunities which have been advertised directly by host organisations or shared by UKRI or other DTPs. Alternatively, the team can help match you with a suitable host from a wealth of non-academic partners in the UK.

You can also arrange your own placement, but you should discuss your plans with the Research in Practice team at an early stage to ensure the proposed placement is viable.

Placements will normally be undertaken in the UK.

Can I do my placement overseas?

It is possible to do your placement overseas, but you should discuss your proposal with the RiP team at an early stage to ensure the placement can be approved.

Key considerations are:

1. the proposed placement clearly meets the requirements of your DNA;
2. there is clear evidence that you cannot develop equivalent skills / experience / networks, which will be central to your development as a social scientist and your future career goals, in the UK; and
3. the cost to the SCDTP does not exceed £1,000.

You should also refer to the UK Government Portal [Foreign Travel Advice](#) as soon as possible to ensure you understand the entry requirements for your proposed placement destination. The portal will give you entry requirements for each of the 226 Countries or territories listed, whether you are a UK national or international student.

Further information can also be found in the [Guidance for International Research in Practice Applications](#).

How is the placement funded?

The Research in Practice placement is funded by the ESRC in that you will continue to receive your stipend to cover your living expenses for the period of the placement.

If your placement requires project-related business trips, for example conducting interviews as part of the placement project, then the placement host should pay all associated expenses.

If your placement requires in person meetings / working in the office, it is reasonable to ask your placement host to contribute to your reasonable travel and subsistence expenses, if they can.

Training focused on budgeting will be available and we will also support students to negotiate with their host organisation to cover reasonable expenses incurred during the placement, where possible.

If the host organisation is unable to provide financial support, you can apply for **up to £1,000** from SCDTP to cover reasonable travel and accommodation expenses. Any expenditure funded by SCDTP will need to be in accordance with your university's financial regulations - further guidance on this can be found in the [SCDTP Finance Guide](#). You will need to book travel and accommodation via your home university's travel provider and keep receipts for out-of-pocket expenditure to support expense

claims. There is a separate sub project code for Research in Practice Placements which will be given to you once your placement budget has been approved.

No further financial support is available from the SCDTP, in particular ESRC is clear that the Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) is intended to support the costs of the PhD research itself and **cannot** be used to fund Research in Practice placement expenses such as travel and accommodation.

The cost of accommodation during an in-person placement (as with other training) can be reduced by staying with family or friends as long as this is in line with your university's risk assessment and insurance policies. Please check and include confirmation with your application where relevant. Without this, any approval will be conditional pending appropriate evidence that no policies are breached.

You can, of course, use your stipend to contribute towards travel and accommodation costs for **in-person** placements if you wish, however, remember to take into account how much you will need to cover your day-to-day living expenses whilst on placement (which could be more expensive than at home) and existing commitments (such as rent and bills) to maintain your main accommodation at home. It is also worth bearing in mind that because any expenditure funded by SCDTP must be in accordance with your university's financial regulations, it may be difficult to **split costs** between SCDTP Research in Practice funding and your stipend.

As a SCDTP student, you will not be expected to pay for any part of the placement yourself.

Can I get a salary or payment from the organisation whilst I am on placement?

It is possible for a host organisation to provide payment for a Research in Practice placement. However, a student cannot receive both a stipend and remuneration at the same time. If a student is paid by the host organisation, their ESRC stipend must be formally suspended for the duration of the placement.

For placements that offer a salary, students should be aware that any earnings may be taxable and, for international students, visa conditions may apply.

Example funding scenarios

1. Unpaid Research in Practice placement (most common situation)

- You receive your ESRC stipend as normal.

- You can apply for up to £1,000 from the SCDTP to cover placement expenses **and/or**
- The host organisation covers all work-related expenses and contributes to reimbursement of personal expenses such as travel and subsistence as required (and accommodation, if necessary, due to the location of the placement and/or if prolonged in person attendance is required).

This is the standard ESRC RiP model and the contribution to expenses is not considered salary or remuneration.

2. Host offers a paid Research in Practice placement (salary or wages)

A host organisation offers to pay you a monthly salary during the placement.

- You cannot receive both your ESRC stipend and host payment at the same time.
- If you accept payment, your ESRC stipend must be formally suspended for the duration of the placement.
- The placement can still count as RiP, provided it meets ESRC placement expectations.
- You can still apply for up to £1,000 from the SCDTP to cover placement expenses

Students should also consider potential tax implications and, if applicable, visa conditions.

3. Host offers a small “honorarium” or stipend top-up

A host offers a small payment in addition to your ESRC stipend.

- ESRC does not permit students to receive both stipend and remuneration at the same time.
- Even small payments may require suspension of the stipend.
- Students should seek advice from SCDTP before accepting any payment.

4. Remote Research in Practice placement with no additional costs

You undertake a remote placement with no travel required.

- You continue to receive your ESRC stipend.
- There are no additional placement costs to reimburse.

Will I need security clearance to do a placement?

Some organisations will require a level of security clearance for you to be able to work within that department, this is to mitigate risks to national security, prevent insider threats, and protect sensitive information, government assets, and critical infrastructure. If you need support about this topic, please contact The Research in Practice team at scdtp@soton.ac.uk.

For internships | placements with UK Government Departments

Government department internships in the UK typically require security clearance, with the most common requirement being the [Baseline Personnel Security Standard \(BPSS\)](#), which verifies identity and right to work.

The vetting process can take several weeks or months, so successful candidates' offers are conditional on completing these checks successfully.

What to expect during the vetting process:

- **Identity Checks:** Verification of your identity and the right to work in the UK.
- **Nationality Rules:** You must meet Civil Service nationality rules, which often require being a British citizen or having a dual nationality including British.
- **Residency Requirements:** You will typically need to have lived in the UK for a minimum number of years to ensure meaningful background checks can be carried out.
- **Criminal Record Checks:** Your criminal record will be checked.

Other host organisations

Some organisations have an internal security check; this could be because you are working with sensitive data or because of the nature of the industry. When setting up your Research in Practice placement, please double check if your host requires any time of security check and the estimated timescales to go through those checks.

Do I need ethics approval as part of my placement?

If you do research as part of your placement then the ethics approval requirements need to be discussed with your host. They may have internal systems they can introduce you to. You will not need ethics approval from your own university as this would not be the institution sponsoring the research.

Do I need to complete a Risk Assessment for my placement?

A **Risk Assessment** must be completed before you commence your placement (unless it is taking place entirely remotely).

Please use the appropriate Risk Assessment template supplied by your awarding University.

The level of detail required will depend on the risk i.e. a placement in the UK will most likely be low risk and can be brief, whereas an international placement is likely to require a more comprehensive assessment, especially if travelling to a less well-developed country.

Students need to complete the appropriate Risk Assessment with the support of their supervisor.

Please email a copy of your completed Risk Assessment to the Research in Practice team using email address scdtp@soton.ac.uk

I have support requirements

If you require reasonable adjustments:

- Refer to your **Student Support Recommendations (SSR)**.
- Discuss your requirements with the placement host.
- A joint meeting (possibly involving your supervisor and/or a member of the Research in Practice team) may be required to complete a risk assessment and finalise adjustments.

What should I do in case of illness while I am on placement?

Minor illness (a minor ailment that requires only a short period to recover): You should contact your placement host to let them know the situation and copy in your lead supervisor and the [Research in Practice Admin Lead](#) for reference.

Serious illness: You should contact your placement host to let them know the situation and copy in your lead supervisor and the [Research in Practice Admin Lead](#) for reference. If you are ill for an extended period and need to suspend your studies, SCDTP can fund a period of sick leave and extend your funding accordingly. If your placement is likely to be severely impacted the Research in Practice team will liaise with your placement host to determine whether the placement can be paused (discussion would also be required with your supervisors and SCDTP in terms of how your milestones would be affected). If

you are a **Student Visa Holder**, you will also need to inform your home university's Visa Team of any extended absence due to serious illness.

In all cases you will also need to report any absence to the SCDTP Admin Team, please email scdtp@soton.ac.uk and copy in your Graduate School as usual.

What happens if I don't go on placement?

The Research in Practice placement is a mandatory and assessed part of your SCDTP training which has been funded by the ESRC.

If for some unavoidable reason you do not manage to go on placement then that period of stipend funding (3 months or part time equivalent) will be withdrawn by the ESRC.

The Research in Practice team and your supervisory team will work with you to help you through the placement process.

Student Safety & Support

Staying in touch

A contact plan should be agreed with your lead supervisor before the placement begins. This can include:

- Confirmation of safe arrival and return
- Regular check-ins with your supervisor
- Additional measures for high-risk or remote placements
- Support from your supervisor for transitioning back to your PhD project

The type and frequency of communication will depend on the circumstances of the placement.

Do I still need a placement contact plan, even though I will mostly be based at home?

It is important that you have ongoing support leading up, during and post placement, and regular contact with your main supervisor is recommended throughout the placement duration.

Wellbeing Support

You can access the **Wellbeing Services** at your university throughout your placement, including if you are overseas.

If you feel unsafe - physically or psychologically - support is available to help you adjust your placement or exit it safely.

Contact your supervisor or the Research in Practice team at scdtp@soton.ac.uk during normal working hours. Outside of normal working hours contact your university's 24/7 wellbeing support.