

Research in Practice – Academic Placements

Guidance for hosts

1 Introduction

The SGSSS Research in Practice - Academic Placement Scheme, offers academic hosts the **opportunity to work with an experienced ESRC funded SGSSS PhD student to add value** to the host's ongoing research work. SGSSS ESRC funded students have been selected following a highly competitive process and are **supported through wraparound training to deliver a high value placement project** for their hosts. Academic placements take place from the second year of studies onwards when the students are already established in their PhD research and have completed core research training.

These guidelines are designed to support hosts with the development and delivery of a range of Research in Practice academic placements with an academic research team, research centre or professional services team at an SGSSS partner HEI.

Research in Practice comprises **two new elements** that are built into the new PhD funding model¹.

1. All ESRC funded students whose funding began from October 2024 are expected to undertake a placement as part of their studentship. The **placement can be** undertaken in a **non-academic or academic** setting.
2. All students will have access to new Research in Practice **wrap-around training** so that they can thrive in a placement with subsequent benefits for their development. The training will enable students to apply their research skills in new environments, communicate with impact, and proactively engage in their own personal development and career direction.

Building on the success of the [SGSSS internship scheme](#), Research in Practice will see a **scaling up** of the existing SGSSS placement offer with non-academic partners **plus the creation of this new academic placement scheme**.

2 Academic placement details

Academic Research in Practice placements are only open to ESRC funded students whose funding began from October 2024 onwards. Placements are three months full time or six months part time, and the mode of placement should reflect the student's mode of study. ESRC funded PhD students will be eligible for an academic placement from their second year (or part time equivalent) of PhD studies onwards.

¹ [ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#) pg. 15

2.1 Academic placement format

- The PhD student can join an already existing, or new, research project/initiative to undertake a clearly defined and realistic package of research work.
- The placement tasks should be discrete, clearly defined and achievable within the context and timing of the proposed placement.
- The placement should develop new research competencies and skills as well as consolidating existing skills, to enhance career prospects and employability.
- The placement cannot be something that casualises or takes work away from existing employees at the institution.
- The placement can be within a research team*, research centre or professional services team.
- Placements hosted by professional services teams should provide insight into the strategic and operational work that underpins and delivers higher education.
- To provide the student with the intended Research in Practice experience of applying their research skills in different contexts, the placement should be hosted outside of the student's supervisor/research team and home department (SGSSS can advise on this as required).
- The placement can take place in any of the SGSSS partner institutions and students are encouraged to consider placements outside of their own institutions to allow the opportunity to engage across a wider network (where the student's personal circumstances allow).

*The host team may be subject to a minimum size. This will depend on the ability and capacity of the team to provide a placement experience that offers the student an understanding of team working with academics at differing career stages, and with relevant skills and expertise to enhance the student's career prospects and development.

2.2 Academic placement student guidance

- Full time students are expected to step back from their PhD to focus on the placement for its duration in line with ESRC guidelines ([ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide pg. 27](#)) we encourage students to minimise other commitments such as other paid work wherever possible, to ensure full engagement with the placement.
- Part time students are expected to step back from their PhD to focus on the placement and can maintain other roles they were holding part time alongside their PhD, e.g. employment, caring responsibilities etc.
- **Academic placements cannot form part of the student's PhD work** for a number of reasons including ethics, data protection and the overarching purpose of the Research in Practice placement as per [ESRC regulations](#).
- Any outputs from the placement cannot be included in the student's PhD project, it must not include data collection or literature/policy review that will be directly included within the thesis.
- Where the placement is in an area of work closely aligned to the thesis, the thesis may reference any written pieces of work completed as part of the internship.

The SGSSS team will review all academic placement offers to ensure they comply with the ESRC placement guidelines.

2.3 Student led academic placements

Students will be offered the option to develop their own academic placements and can approach a potential host academic in a research team, research centre or professional services team that aligns with their skills and interests.

3 Academic Placement Process

3.1 Register of Interest

Interested potential hosts can submit their details [here](#) to join the SGSSS Academic Placements register of interest. Those who are on the register will be contacted prior to the SGSSS rounds of placement advertising to submit their placement proposal.

Academic hosts can also give permission for their information to be held on the SGSSS Research in Practice register of interest for students with relevant interests to approach them for a student led opportunity.

3.2 Call for placement proposals

A call for academic placement proposals will also be shared through SGSSS networks: academic research centres, research teams and professional services teams will be invited to submit proposals outlining their academic placement opportunities. SGSSS will provide a project proposal document and work with hosts to refine proposals where required.

Proposals will be reviewed for inclusion in the SGSSS Academic Placement Scheme based on:

- 1 Extent to which the proposed placement aligns with the objectives of Research in Practice; and
- 2 Extent to which the proposed placement contributes to the career and professional development of the PhD student who will undertake the placement.

Suitable placement opportunities will be advertised to SGSSS ESRC funded students whose funding began after October 2024. Students will submit an application to specific placements via the SGSSS Apply system. Academic hosts will be given a chance to review applications and, where required, interview suitable applicants.

3.3 Student administration and payment

SGSSS will facilitate the circulation of a standard placement agreement to be signed by the placement host, the student, the supervisor and the HEI administrative lead from the student's PhD institution (where different from the placement host institution) before the placement begins.

SGSSS will work with the student's PhD institution to administer stipend payment to the student throughout the placement, in the normal way. SGSSS will also pay expenses of up to £2,400 per student during the academic placement as per the [SGSSS Expenses Policy](#). Expenses payment will be administered through the student's PhD HEI.

3.4 Cost to hosts

Academic placements hosted by a research centre, research team or professional services team at one of SGSSS 16 partner HEIs will **not be charged a host contribution**.

Academic placements at HEIs outside of the SGSSS partner HEIs **will be** required to pay a host contribution of £6,100.

Whilst international placements will be possible the ESRC requires that there is a clear rationale as to why the relevant skills could not be developed at a UK based organisation. Where academic hosts at international HEI are interested in establishing links with an ESRC funded student but do not meet the placement requirements students could consider an [Overseas Institutional Visit \(OIV\)](#).

4 Timeline for Academic Placements 2025/26

Activity	Timing
Academic Placement Register of Interest opens	February 2025
First call for academic placements opens	May 2025
Academic placements proposals submitted and reviewed by SGSSS	May - July 2025
Academic placements open for student applications	July – August 2025
Allocation of PhD students to placement and associated administrative work	September 2025
Academic placements begin	October 2025
Call for academic placements	October 2025
Academic placements proposals submitted and reviewed by SGSSS	December 2025 – February 2026
Academic placements open for student applications	March 2026
Allocation of PhD students to placement and associated administrative work	April 2026
Academic placements begin	May 2026

5 Further information

[Student guidance for Research in Practice placements](#)

[Register of Interest for Academic Placement Hosts](#)

For further information or questions on the SGSSS Academic Placement Scheme email team@sgsss.ac.uk