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# MRC LID Studentship Placements

The purpose of the MRC DTP programme is to provide a cross-disciplinary grounding which incorporates [MRC priorities](#) to all students with MRC LID funding. To do this we require award recipients to

- take taught classes that will expand their education beyond their specific PhD research project,
- enhance their quantitative skills and to embrace multidisciplinary learning (whatever their discipline),
- participate actively in institution centres and groups, and
- complete a 3-month (FTE) placement outside of City St George's, University of London and LSHTM - in another organisation, business, institution or laboratory.

In participating students will benefit from exposure to multi-disciplinary, themed, research networks, formal and informal meetings, seminars and networking opportunities.

## Key placement information

### Why?

Placements have been included as a mandatory part of our DTP because the Board believes they are a valuable opportunity to gain skills and a broader perspective, provide experience of the wider research environment, give access to expertise beyond your immediate research group, demonstrate how research feeds into the development of products or policy, expand your professional network, facilitate career development and allow exploration of future career opportunities.

An MRC LID placement disconnected to your research is a requirement, even if you are already undertaking or planning, separate research-related internships (e.g. iCASE) or institutional visits.

## When?

Your placement should take place after your upgrading. Outside of this, the timing is flexible and should be selected by each student and their supervisor(s) to best accommodate the research project timetable (and placement host).

Placements must be completed before a student's official MRC LID end-of-funding date. In the event that extraordinary circumstances prevent this you should contact MRC LID at the earliest opportunity to advise, and to discuss an alternative plan to complete this requirement.

When planning, you should consider the additional time pressures that are inevitable in the final year of a PhD (and try to avoid adding to these!).

## What?

The MRC LID board does not wish to be too prescriptive, given the wide and varied nature of research/skills MRC LID studentships cover and each student's potential interests and opportunities.

Please keep in mind, the following key placement points:

- It must be in an area not directly related to your PhD project
- It should be in a different research discipline, and in a setting that is not an academic-related research environment.
- It needs to be at a level suitable for a PhD student.
- It must be achievable within the placement duration (3 months FTE).
- It should be set up with the MRC's [funding supplement](#) and [skills priorities](#) in mind.

The placement should be an opportunity to do something completely different. However, it may be possible to undertake a placement that is complementary to your research. For example, if your research project is wet-lab based then you may wish to consider working in a non-lab environment (such as travelling to a field site for set-up and seeing how samples are collected, and what issues arise), or working alongside a communications team that produces non-specialist information and support in science around your area. These are just two ideas amongst many.

The DTP has not created a list of requirements to be met over the placement. This is because we intend for this opportunity to be for **your** individual benefit. (It is **not** intended to be a mechanism for learning enhanced skills required for your research project, or giving you additional research for your thesis, or for publishing a paper, or to enhance your supervisors' profiles/names by providing free labour (via you) to a successful lab!)

Please note that any placement outputs cannot be included in your thesis in any form.

## How?

Think about

- Whether any ideas you have come across and/or potential contacts you have made via the centres and groups, (which you should take every opportunity to be part of as soon as you are registered on your studies) would be useful and/or should be explored further
- What MRC strategic areas and skills you might wish to develop
- When would be a good time to take a chunk of time out of your research degree.
- Whether something would help your future career or add 'extra' to your trajectory.

Be bold and creative. Alumni have used this opportunity to join charities, NGOs, investment banks, pharmaceutical companies, start-ups, UK parliament, the Royal Institution, UKHSA and others.

Start to discuss and plan your MRC LID placement with your supervisors (and MRC LID Board Mentor) within the first 6-12 months of your research degree registration.

Once you have completed initial discussions with a potential host organisation, but before plans are finalised (and definitely before the placement begins), you must submit your placement plans to the MRC LID Board for approval, using the relevant form (available on the [MRC LID Current Students](#) page).

You just need to

- (a) find the right people to help you develop your idea (and possibly share their network connections, where appropriate), and
- (b) be able to articulate to the MRC LID Board why the placement would be good and what opportunities you'd gain from it (skills, perspective, career placement, network building, alternative sector to higher education etc).

## Money?

The MRC LID stipend will be paid throughout, unless a student's placement host will pay a stipend/salary, or a contribution towards a stipend at that time. Students in this situation are expected to declare this to MRC LID as soon as possible, so that correct procedure is followed.

MRC LID expects the placement host

- to meet any in-house costs related directly to the placement project, and
- reimburse you for any costs that are incurred whilst on placement business.

If you are uncertain as to what costs would apply here, please contact MRC LID to discuss.

MRC LID expects that travel to/from your placement and/or accommodation costs incurred should be allocated from your RTSG. Where this is not viable (usually wet lab projects) it may be possible to apply to the MRC LID Flexible Funding for a contribution towards the travel and/or accommodation costs. Please note, though: Flexible funding is limited, pooled and competitive, and therefore is not guaranteed (and/or may not fully support a student's full costs whilst on their placement).

If you are planning to apply for flexible funding to support your placement costs you should submit the flexible funding application alongside your placement request form. The MRC LID Board will consider both at the same time. (If you submit a flexible funding application, you should include

- (a) a budget outlining your RTSG expenditure to date + committed/allocated costs (so that the Board can see what might be available towards your placement), and
- (b) screenshots of placement travel and accommodation quotes to support the amounts you're requesting (and to show that these are reasonable costs).)

## What else do you need to know or consider?

### Registration

You will remain registered for research degree study at your primary institution for the duration of the placement. This means that the standard responsibilities and requirements (between university and student) apply throughout.

### **UKVI requirements**

If you have a study visa for the UK there are some additional requirements that must be met for UKVI purposes. Please contact MRC LID for further discussion at the very early stages of planning.

### **Work pattern**

Placements are for 3 months FTE.

Your overall placement workload is expected to match that of your RD studies. And, therefore, the DTP would expect that

- You do not work more than 35 hours/week (unless agreed).
- You do not work more than 8 hours/day, including the required work breaks (unless otherwise agreed).
- You do not work bank/public holidays or any other university closure days.

Most students tend to complete the placement in a single 3-month block. Some people may request to work part-time, pro-rata or full-time in more blocks. These options are acceptable to the DTP as long as they add up to 3 months FTE. Of course, ultimately, any requests will need to be approved by your supervisor(s) and placement host.

### **Holidays**

You are allowed to take holiday during your placement but only where this has been agreed in consultation with your supervisor(s) and confirmed with your placement host before you begin the placement. Any days taken as holiday do not count towards the 3 months required (and so the length of the placement would need to be extended to account for this). Students are encouraged not to take more than 1 week's holiday whilst on their placement.

### **Insurance**

If you are travelling, and especially if you will be outside of the UK for your placement, you are expected to book comprehensive travel and health insurance through your primary institution in advance and for the full duration.

### **Booking travel**

Flights and other relevant travel should be booked through institutional procurement systems wherever possible. Please see UKRI T&Cs and guidance for further information about expectations on travel bookings.

### **Legal**

Occasionally students are asked to sign paperwork by the host. If you would like this reviewed by the Legal team at your primary institution before you sign, please ask (or pass to MRC LID for us to ask on your behalf).

### **Other required paperwork**

Please keep receipts for any RTSG or flexible funding claims.

When you return, please send a completed Placement Feedback form. This will allow us to share with the Board and MRC Head Office what you did, and what you got out of it. The form can be found on the [MRC LID Current Students](#) page.

### **Reasonable adjustments**

Education providers are legally required to provide reasonable adjustments to students with a disability under UK law. This applies not just to LSHTM and City St George's, University of London but to third-party providers too.

There is an expectation that the adjustments within an LSA would apply across a student's research degree. Therefore, reasonable adjustments must also be considered, and addressed, for periods of your studentship award when you will not be based at your primary institution (including placements)

Discussions about workplace adjustments with your proposed host/provider must be started at the earliest opportunity. Please highlight this to the Student Support team at your primary institution, and notify them of your plans so that they can provide support and guidance with regards to

- (a) considering and assessing your needs in that particular study/work context and setting;
- (b) initial conversations with the proposed host/provider (if you aren't sure of what you might need or confident of what you could ask for, or generally just want support navigating that conversation), and
- (c) follow up discussions and requests, and ensuring that adjustments can be put in place by the host organisation.

Please bear in mind that you will need to give the Student Support team and your proposed host a reasonable period of time to do this.

If adjustments are needed but not possible (e.g., in an international context that can't be enforced by UK law) there may need to be a follow-up conversation with you and your supervisor to determine mitigations or consider whether an alternative option (e.g., another placement) would be more appropriate.

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