

AMS/MRC Policy internship scheme summary

Summary

The Academy of Medical Sciences and the Medical Research Council (MRC) are pleased to open applications to their policy internship scheme, now in its tenth year. Under the scheme, MRC-funded PhD students will have the opportunity to undertake a 12 week policy internship at the Academy.

The scheme is designed to give students first-hand experience of the medical science policy and communications environment, to gain insights into how research can impact on policy, and to build valuable networks with the UK's most eminent medical scientists and key science and health stakeholders.

The details of the Academy scheme are set out below. In brief, interns will be supported by a three-month extension to their PhD maintenance stipend. All eligible candidates will be assessed through a competitive application process.

COVID-19 notice

The Academy of Medical Sciences offices are currently shut in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. As a result, Academy staff are working from home and internships are being conducted "remotely". The Academy is confident that our remote internship programme continues to offer a highly rewarding experience for interns and that the level of support and supervision provided by AMS staff remains high.

Internships will therefore continue to be run remotely whilst the Academy's office are closed. The reopening of the offices will be subject to Government guidance and consultation with staff, but when it is safe to reopen, interns would be based at the AMS offices in London (see below for more detail on the support for travel or relocation).

Interviews for this opportunity will be conducted remotely. Successful candidates will be kept closely informed on any potential impacts on their internship period, and how these can be mitigated or managed.

Experience of PhD students on the Academy's internship scheme:

'The internship at the Academy was one of the best experiences linked to my PhD. This is such a unique opportunity, I would encourage all PhD students to apply for these limited positions.'

'I really enjoyed my time at the Academy, and it has definitely highlighted to me the importance of scientists and clinicians engaging in policy. I really hope in the

future I will have the opportunity to contribute to policy as an academic or clinician. I would definitely recommend the scheme to others.'

'Despite conducting my internship entirely remotely, I was made me feel incredibly welcome and really felt like part of the team, which is a testament to how kind and supportive everyone was.'

'The internship programme has exceeded all my expectations – both in terms of responsibilities and the opportunities made available to me. The staff have all gone out of their way to welcome us, and I hope I can stay in touch long after my three months has expired.'

'I think the main strength of the scheme is the opportunity to engage with so many people, from Academy staff from different teams to the Fellows as well as stakeholders from other organisations.'

'I haven't had exposure to so many high profile researchers in such a short space of time before.'

Former interns planning an academic career have found their experience valuable; for others it has helped them to secure jobs in science policy and science communication.

What the scheme provides

The scheme will:

- Provide future researchers and academic leaders with a deeper understanding of medical science policy.
- Contribute to the exploration of medical science in its wider cultural context by helping to build bridges between the scientific community and policymakers.
- Develop a cadre of people able to work at the interface between medical science and policymaking.
- Allow students to build valuable contacts with senior scientists and policymakers, and expose them to the wide range of public, charitable and commercial organisations involved in UK medical science.
- Provide opportunities for MRC-funded PhD students to develop valuable transferable skills and to enhance their CVs.

Eligibility

The scheme is open to all MRC funded PhD students (based in a university, or MRC centre, unit or institute), including clinicians undertaking a PhD as part of their MRC Clinical Research Training Award, who will be in their third or fourth year of their PhD when their internship takes place. The scheme can also be undertaken in the three month period immediately following the end of a student's MRC funding coming to an end. For example, if your funding ends in April, May or June 2021, you would be able to participate in the July 2021 to

September 2021 placement. However, you would not be able to participate in any subsequent placements.

Information about the candidate's MRC funding period and agreement to provide a three-month extension to the candidate's PhD maintenance stipend during his/her internship must also be provided by the appropriate administration office with signed approval of the budget holder. For internships run in person, this should be an extension at the at the MRC minimum level for London. Remote internships should be continued at the candidate's current rate.

Placements on the scheme are allocated on a competitive basis so withdrawal from the scheme once a place is accepted is likely to result in another potential intern being denied the opportunity to participate.

About the Academy of Medical Sciences

The Academy of Medical Sciences is the independent body in the UK representing the diversity of medical science. Our mission is to promote medical science and its translation into benefits for society. The Academy's elected Fellows are the United Kingdom's leading medical scientists from hospitals, academia, industry and the public service. We work with them to promote excellence, influence policy to improve health and wealth, nurture the next generation of medical researchers, link academia, industry and the NHS, seize international opportunities and encourage dialogue about the medical sciences.

Activity of interns

The Academy's policy work addresses issues of medical science, healthcare and biomedical careers. Areas of policy work originate from within the Academy Council and wider Fellowship, as well as in response to issues raised by Government, Parliament and other relevant bodies, including stakeholders such as industry, medical research charities, medical Royal Colleges and regulators. This work can take many forms: major reports, shorter position papers, seminars and workshops, correspondence, representation on Government and external panels, evidence to Parliamentary committees, private meetings and roundtables with key decision makers. Recent major policy studies have tackled COVID-19: Preparing for a challenging winter 2020-21; Public involvement and engagement in research during the COVID-19 pandemic; healthy ageing; 'Team Science' and a wide range of other topics.

During the 12 week internship, students will be involved in a variety of activities that will give them experience of many aspects of medical science policy and related activities. This will include one or more discrete projects led by the intern. The range of activities will include:

- Writing, editing, proofreading and referencing policy papers, e.g. responses to public consultations, papers and summaries for working groups, Council or Officers meetings.

- Desk-based research and scoping, e.g. preparing project proposals or undertaking literature reviews.
- Evidence gathering and preparation, e.g. preparation of contacts lists, drafting calls for evidence, collating and summarising evidence.
- Events organisation, e.g. preparing conference materials, helping to co-ordinate activities on the day.
- Communications activities, including the use of new media.
- Attending (virtual) internal and external events, e.g. Parliamentary Select Committees, working group meetings, PolicyNet and other lectures.
- Opportunities to observe an MRC funding board meeting, and to meet the MRC's Capacity and Skills team and public affairs and policy teams if desired.

Structure of the scheme

The 12 week internships will be full-time positions. To facilitate this time away from research, students will be supported by a three-month extension to their MRC PhD stipend while they are based at the Academy.

Whilst the Academy is operating remotely, we have taken a number of steps to ensure that interns continue to receive the necessary support. Each intern will be allocated a supervisor from amongst the Academy staff who will:

- Provide line management and guidance.
- Conduct entry and exit interviews.
- Co-ordinate office review of the documents produced by the intern.
- Carry out relevant administration in accordance with the Academy's Human Resources policies.

In addition, interns will meet regularly with members of the Policy team and the Academy's wider staff. Interns will be expected to use their own laptops and receive IT support for remote working from the Academy's facilities team.

Internships will be offered in 12 week time blocks from April 2020 to March 2021. Candidates are invited to indicate their preferred time to undertake the placement, although we cannot guarantee the timing of placements.

Application procedure

Candidates are asked to supply:

- A completed application form, including an endorsement and a supporting statement from their supervisor and relevant institutional administration office.
- A short covering letter briefly describing their reasons for application.
- A CV.
- A short article, no more than 800 words in length, on a medical science policy topic. Students may choose a topic related to their PhD, an area of personal interest or select from the options below.
 - Medical research in the NHS

- Government support for science and research
- Translating research into policy and practice
- Scientific education and training (including women in science)
- Interdisciplinarity and 'team science'
- Research reproducibility
- Use of animals in medical research
- Research regulation and governance
- 'Big data' and its application in medical research
- Chronic diseases and global health
- Emerging technologies

The article should highlight the main policy issues of the chosen topic and the implications for the key stakeholders who are required to make decisions in the area, which may include government, industry and/or funding organisations. The article should demonstrate the candidate's ability to write in a style suitable for a policy (rather than academic) audience.

Short-listed applicants will be invited to an interview with a selection panel of Academy and MRC staff.

Applications will be welcomed from Tuesday 3 September 2019 and must be received by **midnight on Monday 8 March 2021**. Interviews will be conducted on **week commencing 12 April 2021**.

Queries should be directed to Applications should be submitted electronically to Dr Tom Livermore, Policy Manager at the Academy of Medical Sciences: tom.livermore@acmedsci.ac.uk. Please call Tom on: 020 3141 3220 with any queries.

Policy internship scheme summary: FAQs for applicants

For information on the scheme, you should refer to the scheme summary, which is available on the Academy of Medical Sciences website. This FAQs document is intended to answer specific questions that you may have in relation to your application.

Eligibility

Who is eligible for the scheme?

The scheme is open to all MRC-funded PhD students (based in a university, or MRC centre, unit or institute), including clinicians undertaking a PhD as part of in their MRC Clinical Research Training Award, who will be in their third or fourth year of their PhD when their internship takes place.

Can I choose the timing of the internship?

The 2021/22 internship scheme will run four times: from July 2021 – September 2021, October 2021 – December 2021, January 2022 – March 2022 and April 2022 – June 2022. You can indicate on your application your preference regarding timings; however, positions are limited and we cannot guarantee that places will be offered on the preferred dates. Exact start and end dates for successful applicants will be confirmed within a month of the beginning of each internship.

Am I able to participate after my PhD funding has finished?

The scheme can also be undertaken in the three month period immediately after your funding comes to an end. For example, if your funding ends in April, May or June 2021, you would be able to participate in the July 2021 to September 2021 placement. However, you would not be able to participate in any subsequent placements.

COVID-19

Will the internship take place if the Academy is working remotely?

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Application process

What happens after I submit my application?

Candidates whose applications are shortlisted will be invited for a virtual interview in week commencing 12 April 2021. If, due to exceptional circumstances, you are unable to attend during this week, you should state this on your application form and the Academy will contact you to make alternative arrangements.

Do I need to include referees in my application?

Your application must be endorsed by your primary PhD supervisor. There is a section on the application form for your supervisor to complete. Your institution's appropriate administration office must also provide information about your MRC funding period and agree to provide a three-month extension to your PhD stipend if you are successful in your application (see 'Financial arrangements' below).

Written article

What are you hoping to see from my written article?

We are looking for a well-constructed, considered article, which demonstrates an interest in a policy topic and an appreciation of what makes your topic of relevance to policy-makers. There are many ways that you could achieve this. If you are writing about your own area of research you should focus on its policy implications – not simply describe your research. We are particularly interested in the relevance to the Academy and/or MRC of the policy issue you choose. The most important thing to remember is that we are offering the internship as a learning experience; we do not expect you to submit a perfectly polished piece of policy writing.

Who is the written article meant to be aimed at; what is their level of scientific expertise?

The piece should be aimed at a non-specialist audience and written at a level that an interested lay person could understand, while conveying the policy significance of the issue/research.

Can you provide previous examples of written articles?

We do not make previous examples available to applicants. Examples of policy-writing can be found on the Academy's website and those of other relevant organisations (for example, MRC, the Royal Society, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology).

Should I include references in my written article?

Please include references where you think they are appropriate. This is not a science-based essay, so perhaps does not need some of the robust referencing that you might include in a journal article. However, as a policy essay it should be evidence-based; so, for example, you should look to back up claims with appropriate references (e.g. if you are quoting statistics).

Financial arrangements

What financial arrangements need to be in place for me to participate in the scheme?

If you are successful in your application, your institution will need to provide a three-month extension to your PhD stipend. We require confirmation from your institution's appropriate administration office that it is willing to do so as part of your application (see 'Application process' above). The stipend extension could be supported through the MRC Doctoral Training Partnership supplement, or through other sources if appropriate. MRC will consider funding extensions for Clinical Research Training Fellowships (CRTF) eligible for the scheme on a case by case basis. You should discuss this with your institution prior to submitting your application.

What if I live outside of London and need to travel or temporarily relocate in order to take part in the scheme?

In the event that the Academy's office does open, MRC will be able to contribute up to £2400 towards the travel and accommodation costs of interns who are normally based outside London. These amounts will be agreed in principle once all placements have been confirmed and will be paid to the student through the Academy of Medical Sciences.

Successful applicants should contact the Academy for confirmation of their eligibility for a travel grant and information on how to access it.
