

# British Library PhD Placement Scheme

## Application Guidelines 2025



### About the British Library

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom. It gives access to a comprehensive research collection with items from every age of written civilisation, supports traditional and digital scholarship and engages researchers and the public through online resources, events and exhibitions.

Our vision is explained in [Knowledge Matters - British Library Strategy 2023-2030](#).

### The British Library PhD Placement Scheme

UK research funders, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Doctoral Training Partnerships and other postgraduate and early-career training providers encourage doctoral students to engage with research users and audiences outside the academic context to broaden their skill set and consider a wide range of career paths. The British Library PhD Placement Scheme was set up in 2016 to provide such opportunities and help meet the demand for postgraduate training and development in the UK.

Research across many different areas and disciplines is central to our work. This environment makes the Library an ideal place for PhD students to experience research in new contexts, engage with audiences, gain insights into career paths outside Higher Education, build professional networks and participate in the activities of a national library and major cultural organisation.

PhD placements offer the opportunity to work on a project in a specific area under the supervision of Library staff. Following an initial induction, placements will involve independent research and require the ability to work autonomously, supported by regular meetings with the British Library supervisor, towards an agreed set of objectives.

Students may apply for a project not directly related to their own PhD and will be encouraged to refine, adapt or extend placement tasks and outputs in line with their own interests and development needs.

Projects offer an opportunity to experience practice-based research and the work of the Library tangibly and in a variety of ways. Projects may for example:

- improve the accessibility and understanding of collections, their history and context;
- support large-scale data analytics and digital scholarship;
- contribute to the Library's public engagement programmes;
- produce new research insights, teaching and learning resources and online content;
- help inform policy in core areas, such as digital preservation, sustainability or open access;
- support international engagement and partnerships.

### Training and development

During their time at the Library, PhD placement students have access to a wide range of workshops, talks and training. Supervisors will offer advice on which opportunities may be of particular interest. Depending on when the placement takes place, development and networking opportunities may

include, for example, the Digital Scholarship Training Programme, Researcher Lunches, Business & IP Centre workshops, and postgraduate work-in-progress talks and seminars.

Placement supervisors will provide an induction and facilitate other training that may be required to undertake a specific placement. Details are provided in the individual project descriptions.

## Eligibility

- The Library welcomes applications to its PhD Placement Scheme from all current PhD students registered with a UK university.
- International PhD students are eligible to apply, subject to meeting any UK visa/residency requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they are meeting these requirements. We are unable to provide sponsorship or advice for visas.
- The Library is an equal opportunities placement provider and encourages applications from PhD students from all backgrounds.
- PhD placement scheme applicants must have the support of their supervisor. Successful applicants must secure the approval of their institution and training grant provider as necessary.

### In addition, the following applies:

- If you are in the final year of your PhD: You are eligible to apply, provided that you are able to undertake all of the placement prior to submission of your thesis.
- If you have not begun your PhD: If you have been accepted as a PhD student from academic year 2025/26 onwards, you are not eligible to apply in this round. [Feel free to contact us to be added to our mailing list](#) and receive notification of future opportunities. Our PhD Placement Scheme runs annually.
- For both on-site and remote placements, you must be based in the UK at the time of undertaking the placement.
- The Library is responsible for all documentation relating to the placements, and no additional paperwork will be completed. The student is advised to check in advance of application that the Library's paperwork is acceptable for their HEI's internal processes.

## Funding

Applicants are expected to ascertain what funding is available to them through their HEI, doctoral training grant provider or other sources to support the period of the placement. We strongly recommend that a PhD student given approval to undertake a placement is in receipt of a stipend at least equivalent to the current [UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Rate](#) for the duration of the placement.

Successful candidates unable to secure sufficient funding through their HEI or other sources are welcome to apply to the Library's PhD Placement Fund for assistance. The PhD Placement Fund will only be able support a limited number of students, and the level of funding available will depend on individual circumstances and overall demand. The maximum award will be £1650 per month, pro rata. Students who have previously had placement funding of any kind are not eligible to apply. All awards must be allocated prior to June 2025.

## Timeframe, location and working arrangements

PhD placements are offered for 3 months full time or, wherever possible, part-time equivalent. Part-time arrangements will be agreed between the successful applicant and the placement supervisor, but will usually require a minimum of 2-2.5 days per week to be spent on the placement project.

Placements available for this round can start no earlier than June 2025 and must be completed by March 2026 at the latest. Unless otherwise stated in the project description, there will be some flexibility around the placement start date.

Placements will be hosted by a Library department based at the site stated on the placement profile, usually at St Pancras (London) or at Boston Spa (Yorkshire). Where the project allows this, the option to undertake some or all of the placement remotely will also be offered.

Any remote working arrangements will be discussed between the successful applicant and the placement supervisor. If remote working is agreed, the student will be required to ensure that they have access to the necessary technical equipment (e.g. laptop/PC, internet access) to successfully and safely undertake the agreed placement tasks. When working on site at the Library, all necessary equipment will be provided.

The student must be based in the UK at the time of undertaking the placement, even if the placement is undertaken remotely.

## **Selection process**

All applications will be assessed against the criteria specified under 'Required knowledge and skills' included in each placement description.

We receive a high volume of applications, but all applicants will be notified of the outcome approximately 4-5 weeks after the deadline. Applicants shortlisted for the next stage will be invited to interview in March/April 2025. Interviews will be held using Microsoft Teams. Interview dates will vary.

All placement offers and start dates for successful candidates will be subject to the British Library's security clearance processes, which may take up to 6 weeks.

Placements offer student development opportunities within the specific context outlined in each project description and for the duration indicated. A placement offer does not constitute an offer of temporary or permanent employment at the British Library.

## **How to apply**

1. Ensure that you have checked the eligibility criteria on page 2 of this document.
2. Select the placement project you would like to apply for. Read the project description and requirements carefully.
3. Confirm with your supervisor that they support your application for a placement project.
4. Complete the Microsoft Form. You can apply for a maximum of two placement opportunities, and you must complete a separate form for each.
5. Submit the Microsoft Form by the application deadline on **21 February 2025, 5pm (GMT)**.

## **Questions?**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the Research Development team: [pgr@bl.uk](mailto:pgr@bl.uk)

**Good luck with your application!**