

British Library PhD Placement Scheme

Application Guidelines 2021/22

About the British Library

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

The Library's purpose and vision are explained in [Living Knowledge: The British Library 2015–2023](#) and complemented by a recent strategic statement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, [Living Knowledge – For Everyone: the British Library's role in national renewal](#).

The British Library PhD Placement Scheme

Our PhD Placement Scheme was set up in 2016 to help meet the demand for postgraduate training and development in the UK. Research is central to the work happening behind the scenes across different areas of the Library. This environment makes the Library an ideal place for PhD students to experience research in new contexts, engage with different 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 experts. 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 do not have to apply for a project that is directly related to their own PhD and will be encouraged to refine, adapt or extend placement tasks and outcomes in line with their own interests, expertise or development needs.

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

- enhance 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;
- inform policy research in core areas, such as digital preservation or open access;
- support international engagement and partnerships.

Examples of previous PhD placement projects can be found on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/research-collaboration/doctoral-research/phd-placements-at-the-british-library>

Training and development

All PhD placement students are welcome to access the range of workshops, talks and training available to Library staff. Supervisors will be able to offer advice on which opportunities may be of particular interest. Depending on when the placement takes place, training may include, for example, the Digital Scholarship Training Programme and 21st Century Curatorship Talks, Research Roundtables, or Business & IP Centre workshops and events.

Any specific training required to undertake the placement will be provided, and details of this is provided in the individual project profiles.

Eligibility

- The Library welcomes applications to its PhD Placement Scheme from all current PhD students that have the right to study in the UK. International PhD students are eligible to apply, subject to meeting any UK short-term study visa requirements.
- The Library is an equal opportunities placement provider and especially welcomes applications from PhD students with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- PhD placement scheme candidates must have the support of their academic supervisor when applying.

Funding

UK research funders, 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 is intended to provide such training opportunities.

It is essential that applicants obtain the support of their PhD supervisor in advance and that they ascertain what funding is available to them through their HEI, Doctoral Training Partnership or other sources to support the period of the placement. The Library strongly recommends that a PhD student who is 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.

While we are currently unable to provide funding to all successful applicants, students unable to secure sufficient funding through their HEI or other sources will be invited 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 whether full or partial funding will be offered will depend on individual circumstances and overall demand.

Duration, location and 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. Usually a minimum of 2 days per week should be spent on the placement project.

Unless otherwise stated in the project profile, there will be some flexibility around the placement start date, to be agreed between the successful applicant and the supervisor. Placements available for this round can start from May 2021 onwards and must be completed by March 2022 at the latest.

Placements will generally be based at the site stated on the placement profile, either the Library's London site at St Pancras or its site in Boston Spa, Yorkshire.

Where possible, the option to undertake some, or in certain cases all, of the placement remotely will be offered. Irrespective of whether a project is suitable for remote working, all students are welcome to undertake their placement on site for a full and varied experience, subject to their own personal circumstances and any social distancing measures in place at the time.

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.

Criteria and selection process

All applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Excellent written and verbal communication skills
2. Working knowledge of Microsoft Office applications and online meeting tools
3. Ability to work independently and with others
4. Clear reasons for applying for the selected placement opportunity, and an understanding of the placement context
5. Project-specific skills as detailed in individual placement profiles

Applicants shortlisted for the next stage will be invited to interview for February/March 2021. It is envisaged that interviews will be held using an online platform.

All interviewed applicants will be notified of the outcome. For successful applicants, a start date will be agreed. All placement offers will be subject to the British Library's security clearance processes, which may take up to 6 weeks.

How to apply

1. Refer to the project profile for the placement opportunity you wish to apply for. All placement opportunities are advertised [on the British Library website](#).
2. Complete the Application Form. You can apply for a maximum of 2 placement opportunities, and you must complete a separate form for each.
3. Submit your completed Application Form(s) to Research.Development@bl.uk.
4. The application deadline is **5pm on Friday 18 December 2020**.

Contact for enquiries

If you have any questions about PhD Placements at the British Library, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Research Development Team:

Research.Development@bl.uk