

What do PhDs think about our placement scheme?

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With more than 200 PhD placements since 2016, alumni share how the scheme has shaped their research, skills and careers.

PhD students on placement with the Open Innovation Team work on live policy projects, contribute to real commissions and develop skills in communicating evidence beyond academia.

Participants gain experience they can take back into research or into future roles across the public, private and third sectors.

Hear directly from PhD students about what they worked on, what they learned and how the placement influenced their next steps.

Manjiri Bhat

PhD in Computational Modelling of Visual Foraging Behaviour and Cognition, University of Essex

During my three-month placement I had the chance to work on two very interesting projects: one on algorithmic transparency commissioned by the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), and another on tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) content commissioned by the Home Office (HO). Both projects were genuinely eye-opening in terms of how policy-relevant research gets done in practice, from reviewing academic and grey literature, to interviewing experts around the world, and finally pooling everything together into a clear and concise report.

If you're a PhD student with an interest in research that actually influences policy, I'd really encourage you to apply for this placement. Whatever your research background, there's a place for you here!

Enrico Pfeifer

Research Fellow in Epidemiology, UCL

When I went back to my PhD after the placement, something had changed. I still cared just as much about the rigour of my work and getting the methods right, but I found myself thinking more about how to explain the work clearly, who it needed to reach, and what it might be useful for.

It did not pull me away from research. If anything, it helped me share it more confidently beyond academia.

If you are a doctoral student wondering whether your work can live beyond journals and conferences, my answer is yes. It can, and it should.

Read Enrico's blog about his experience

Ibrahim Ince

DPhil Researcher in Anthropology, Oxford

The confidence to make insights more accessible and actionable through clear language is a skillset I will take away with me.

An anthropological mindset helps me navigate the complex, fast-paced and deeply collaborative nature of the policy world. Foregrounding stories, reading between the lines, navigating uncertainty and trying to piece together a comprehensive picture of what is unfamiliar are all developed through ethnographic practice, which certainly has use beyond the field.

Read Ibrahim's blog about his experience

We regularly host PhD students from a wide range of disciplines and universities.

To hear about future opportunities and learn more about our work, follow the Open Innovation Team on LinkedIn.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-do-phds-think-about-our-placement-scheme>