



STATEMENT ON INTERSHIPS

The issue of internships being a formal option within the CDT Training Academy's 20-week programme has been discussed by the CDT Industry Advisory Board (IAB) and Training Academy Committee (TAC).

The IAB and TAC are very supportive of the notion that our CDT students are able to take up internship opportunities during the course of the 4-year PhD, subject to agreement with their supervisors and host degree-awarding institution as well as any additional funder e.g. BGS (BUFI scheme) as appropriate.

In general, there are two main types of internship: one aligned with the PhD research topic being undertaken and another which is entirely independent of the PhD.

As the former is part of the PhD, it is expected that this will be in the form of a visit to a lab or office on an unpaid basis. In that event, there is no necessity to suspend the PhD studies. However, if the internship has a stipend attached, the PhD funding would need to be stopped for the period of the placement as it is not permitted to be in receipt of two incomes at the same time.

In the event of securing an internship which is independent of the PhD research, a student can be in receipt of an internship stipend for the period that they are in-house at the company, but their PhD stipend and studies must be suspended for that time.

The Research Councils UK's (RCUK) Conditions of Research Training Grants which govern the NERC CDT studentships (irrespective of the source of funding for the individual studentship) include the following two clauses relating to Internships and Placements:-

'29.1 Students may undertake a work placement or internship where this is either directly related to the student's training, or provides valuable transferable skills and, provided this is well justified and approved in advance by their supervisor and Research Organisation (i.e. Heriot-Watt)

29.2 The placement may be an integral part of the award, in which case a suspension of an extension of the student's funded period is not required. In other cases, there may be a case for the award to be extended. However, if a placement is not directly part of their PhD programme (i.e. is undertaken for purely personal reasons) or the student is receiving a payment for the placement, then the studentship should be suspended. The studentship end dates and expected submission dates should be amended on the Je-S SDP to reflect suspension periods.'

The TAC members agreed that it is too complex to draw up and regulate a standard and consistent policy across the CDT that fits with the many different local regulations of host universities.

The CDT administration are happy to provide certification of a student's CDT status and training attendance in support of an application for an internship, but is not able to source or otherwise assist in arranging internships. This remains the responsibility of the student and their supervisory team in compliance with local university policy and procedure.

One of the assessment criteria for the success of the CDT is the submission rate of the partner institutions and the RCUK Conditions document also states:-

'BBSRC, NERC and STFC expect submission within the funded period.' In other words, extensions to the period of study for the purposes of an internship or placement are actively discouraged.

This has led some CDT partner universities to disallow any opportunity for internships or placements as they are keen to maintain a high completion rate within the funded period for their own reputation as well as for the CDT's. There are also additional administrative costs in seeking approval from NERC to continue paying from the grant beyond its stated end date to cover individual students whose studentship period is extended and this financial risk is borne by the student's university.

It is therefore entirely at the discretion of the local supervisory team and the registering university whether CDT students are allowed to undertake an internship, particularly a placement that will entail an extension to the period of study. NERC and the CDT recognise the benefits of internships or work placements where these are demonstrated to be integral to the student's research topic, or of considerable benefit to the student's overall development. The CDT is willing to support locally agreed internships in our annual reporting to NERC despite the impact on completion rates but would propose that partner universities only consider requests for internships or placements which will result in the temporary suspension of studies and an extension to submission date in cases where the following criteria are met:-

1. The internship/placement has demonstrable benefits to the student's research and/or career development
2. CDT internship period should be no more than 4 months' duration in total
3. The internship should normally be taken in the 3rd year of the 4 year studentship

Internships schemes vary and placements can be of differing durations. This guidance recommends that a period of 4 months to cover one or more internships be considered as standard during the 4 year research period of each CDT studentship (1 internship of 4 months is permissible as are two internships of 2 months each, or another combination so long as the combined duration does not exceed 4 months).

If a placement is agreed between the student and their supervisory team, please ensure that any other funders (e.g. BGS (BUFI)) have also agreed this in advance.

Please also inform the NERC CDT Manager, Lorna Morrow, (L.H.Morrow@hw.ac.uk) as soon as your internship has been confirmed so that the appropriate adjustment on the RCUK national database system is made.

The above text is provided for guidance only and the negotiation of an internship remains at the discretion of the university where the student is registered.