Who We Are

Cambridge University is one of the largest and most prestigious research communities in the United Kingdom.

The University of Cambridge hosts one of the largest communities (approx. 2,000) of social science researchers in the UK.

The University aims to consolidate its position as a global social science powerhouse, engaging in cutting edge cross-disciplinary research, capitalizing on our unique breadth and depth in social and behavioural sciences, and reinforcing our links with internationally leading research in the arts and humanities, and STEM disciplines.

Cross-disciplinary thinking, learning and collaboration are hallmarks of social science research in Cambridge, and embody an approach which we believe is central to the social and behavioural sciences in the 21st century.

Over the past five years, the University has established a number of collaborative networks and

Strategic Research Initiatives; our DTP will be embedded within this outward-looking multi-disciplinary framework. We are committed to building capacity in the social sciences and to giving social science more visibility and voice - both within the University, and in other social and public contexts.

With direct funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Cambridge Social Science Partnership comprises of an internal network of 24 plus participating Departments at Cambridge, with a growing network of non-academic partners (across business, industry, policy and third sector)

Committed to working with partners to facilitate collaboration and ultimately help drive innovation
Thematic Clusters

Our approach is based around thematic clusters, which address what we see as major social science challenges of our time.

These clusters form the context for multi-disciplinary pathways to doctoral research and training in the DTP.

The thematic clusters are summarized below and described in greater detail elsewhere in the document; there are obvious overlaps between them, but we see this as a strength in our capacity to address the challenges from which they spring.

Research within each cluster will be at a range of levels: the macro level, relating to broad global and structural concerns; the meso level, relating to national and institutional factors; and the micro level, relating to the behaviour or concerns of individuals, organizations, social groups or localities.

What is distinctive about Cambridge’s approach to these crucial challenges?

These thematic clusters explicitly align with important strategic priorities within the University - reflecting ongoing research interests, signposting emergent themes, and addressing some of the ESRC’s own concerns and interests.

Deliberately timely, they echo the University’s challenge-led approach, which has fostered a flourishing range of cross-disciplinary Strategic Research Initiatives (SRIs) around strategic societal challenges, including big data, conservation, energy, global food security, neuroscience, and public policy.

Opportunities For Partners

The DTP is excellently situated to draw on this network of students and academics to deliver opportunities for partners to engage in knowledge exchange and experience-based activities.

We have a defined strategy for encouraging organisations to benefit for partnership with the DTP through a variety of mechanisms: i) delivery of training e.g. through employability days or through masterclass events related to particular topics e.g. Energy; ii) support for placements and internships; iii) collaborative support for PhD projects (recent examples include DEFRA, YouGov and RSPB); iv) Co-funding for studentships (recent examples include the AKU Society); Joining our Advisory Panel.

Additionally there are opportunities for organisations to work with the University in training and knowledge exchange activities of mutual interest through the ESRC’s Postdoctoral Fellowship (PDF) Scheme aimed at those in the immediate postdoctoral stage of their career, providing new innovative placement models tailored to the business environment.
Co-funding for studentships

The Cambridge ESRC DTP has been recognised as a leading outlet of social science graduate training and will support a minimum of 33 promising students each year from 2017-2022.

For this year (2017-18) we have managed to increase to 41 with match-funding).

Match-funding of Knowledge exchange studentships (KES) is a very popular and rewarding engagement for partners as they are expected to contribute only up to a maximum of 50% of the total costs of the studentship (approx. £36k for a 3-year studentship).

This provides partners with the opportunity to create high quality PhD studentships undertaking cutting-edge research relevant to their priorities and objectives.

Process

Collaborative project proposals must set out and secure 'in principle' commitment from the Management Executive Group (MEG) in the Michaelmas Term (Tue 2 Oct – Fri 30 Nov 2018) preceding admission for the academic year 2019-2020.

Once secured, the Departments then proceed to identify an appropriate student either from the applicant pool or through advertisement.

Up to 5 Knowledge Exchange Studentships will be available in 2019.

The Cambridge ESRC partnership - Internship scheme

This scheme provides Cambridge Social Science Partnership funded PhD students with the opportunity to spend between 1-6 months in a non-academic organisation to work on projects that develop and utilise research and transversible skills.

We encourage students from all disciplines to apply as internships are a chance to gain 'real world' experience and apply transferrable research skills outside the HE sector.

Over the years we have sponsored successful opportunities for our students in a range of diverse sectors.

Such examples include internships and placements with BT, Unilever, Defra, Microsoft Research, Amazon, Genomics England, the Cabinet Office, Department for International Trade, Cambridge City Council, Newsec and the UN among others.

Most of the internships can be done either on a part-time or full-time basis, some internships provide elements of remote working which may help to make them more accessible to some students, although there are rewards in direct working in new working environment and context.

The Cambridge ESRC Social Science Partnership is very much committed to the idea of 'real world research' and we want our students to gain experience of working with outside partners. We also strongly believe that there can be mutual benefits in such collaboration.
Our Success Stories

There are many significant benefits in engaging with the Cambridge ESRC DTC, not least the opportunity to gain access to top quality, highly talented, skilled and knowledgeable postgraduate researchers who can help drive innovation and growth in your organisation. We have the flexibility to design working relationships to suit the needs of collaborative partners.

A selection of experiences from organisations which have previously collaborated with ESRC studentships:

‘What made this so beneficial was that the Cambridge intern was so smart and adaptable that she contributed greatly to what we were working on. Her additional enthusiasm was much needed as well!’
M&C Saatchi World Services

‘The Cambridge Intern very quickly produced a project plan that recognized and responded to the Library’s aims. Outcomes from this placement exceeded initial expectations and are relevant and useful to the Library.’
The British Library

‘The intern was committed and enthusiastic throughout. We scoped out a new research area and jointly produced a blog which received pretty good levels of attention.’
RAND Europe

‘Turning the analysis into a student project enabled us to discover that the data is not freely available, without us having to spend the time ourselves, and was therefore still a great benefit to the business.’
Whitbread

‘It was important to our research to have a contribution from a linguist. This expertise brought a very distinct and unique perspective to the work that we don’t have at the lab and that complimented our research ambitions.’
Microsoft Research

‘It was very productive to have a dedicated researcher to bring academic rigour and investigative ability to the knotty and overwritten realm of making a business case for environmental awareness. The partnership also had the benefits of educating the student in the corporate world and the different needs and drivers within that arena. A win-win for both sides’.
Tesco

Where can I find out more?

For more information about the Cambridge ESRC Social Science Partnership, our participating Departments and how to apply for a knowledge exchange studentship, internships and any other activity, please contact Dr Konstantina Stamati, Cambridge Social Science Partnership Manager at ks712@cam.ac.uk