



Nuffield Research Placements Guide for student applicants

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Introduction

Given the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the continuously shifting circumstances, the **Nuffield Research Placements** (NRP) programme has been adapted so that an entirely virtual programme model can now be offered to students and Project Supervisors alike.

We would like to emphasise, however, that there remains the potential for some on-site, real-world research collaborations but the possibility for this will be subject to Government guidelines and host organisation limitations during summer 2021.

Brief overview of the NRP programme

What?

A well-supervised but independent research project relating to an area of science, quantitative social science, computing, technology, engineering or maths (or a combination!).

When?

Summer holidays after Year 12 (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or S5 (in Scotland).

How long?

4 - 6 weeks, which includes some independent study online ahead of the on-site* real-world research collaboration activities.

Where?

Placements are in a variety of locations, including offices, museums, research centres, laboratories or fieldwork settings*

**Due to the impact of COVID-19 and Government guidance and subject to the limitations of the placement host organisation, the real-world research collaboration with a Project Supervisor may not be able to go ahead on-site. In the event that on-site research is not possible, this activity will continue online instead.*

Costs?

Students can take part in a placement at no cost: travel costs are reimbursed, and some students may be eligible to receive a £200 bursary (see Appendix 1).

A bit more information on the “What?”

Within this new offering, Nuffield students will be guided through the following: -

- an independent study support package consisting of online module assignments designed to develop your essential professional, research, data and numeracy skills
- collaboration with a knowledge expert on a ‘live’ research question relating to an area of science, quantitative social science, computing, technology, engineering or maths (or a combination!) to develop your essential STEM skills and result in a research poster & report
- a timetable of optional supplementary workshops and webinars that are geared towards careers guidance and training on key topics e.g. Python programming language.

Why should I do it?

By taking part, you will complete a meaningful and rewarding experience that will develop your research, critical thinking, planning, time management and communication skills. You should be enthusiastic and ready to challenge and stretch yourself in order to fully develop these transferable skills that will prove valuable in whatever career path you choose.

Participation will also provide you with constructive supervision from knowledge experts thereby allowing additional scope for you to become more confident working on novel situations. In many cases, the collaboration on a research question will allow you to make a notable contribution to the work of your Project Supervisor and include this experience within your applications to Higher Education. Some past students have even been co-authors of scientific or technical publications!

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, students must:

- Be over 16 years old and in Year 12 or S5.
- Be in full-time, state-funded education in the UK.
- Have at least 5 GCSEs at Level 6/Grade B or above OR Scottish Nationals at Level B or above, including maths, a science subject and English (or another humanities subject).
- Be studying one or more A-levels or Scottish Highers (or equivalent) in science, technology, engineering, economics, geography, psychology, computing, statistics or maths.
- Be available for a few consecutive weeks over July and/or August to collaborate with your Project Supervisor.

Students must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Be living, or have lived, in local authority care.
- Come from a family with a combined household income of below £30,000 a year
- Be entitled to free school meals, either now or at any time in the last six years.
- Be the first in your immediate family to participate in higher education (not including any older siblings).
 - This means that neither of your parents/carers have participated in higher education, either in the UK or another country.
 - If your siblings have attended higher education, but your parents/carers have not, you are still eligible.

If you have any questions about your eligibility or about the NRP programme in general, please contact your Regional Coordinator for more information. You can find out who your local coordinator is [here](#).

Application process

The application process and the information supplied during it enable the NRP team and Regional Coordinators to: consider your application to the NRP programme; to manage your placement if you are successful and; to monitor and evaluate the programme.

The online application system can be found [here](#).

The application form requires you to provide the following:

- Personal information such as your home and contact details
- Educational information such as your school, the qualifications you have already achieved and the qualifications you are currently studying
- Placement information such as your preferred placement subject area, your availability and any dietary, adjustments or access requirements that you think it would be helpful for us to know
- A personal statement outlining your interest in completing a Nuffield Research Placement.
- Details about any other outside interests or enrichment programmes you are taking part in
- A full bursary application (if you think this is applicable to you)
- Nomination of a teacher to provide a reference.
- Agreement form from your parent/guardian(s).

You can start the application process and come back to it at any time by saving your progress as you add information into each section.

Programme timetable

Nov 2020 – Mar/Apr 2021	Apr – Jun 2021	Jun – Jul 2021	Jul – Aug 2021	Aug – Sept 2021
<p>Applications are completed by students and eligibility screening is undertaken by Coordinators</p>	<p>Coordinators complete matching of students to available projects</p> <p>Virtual student and Project Supervisor inductions</p>	<p>Students undertake initial independent study support package</p>	<p>Collaboration with a knowledge expert on a 'live' research question</p> <p>Optional student supplementary workshops & webinars</p>	<p>Communication of research findings through high quality report and poster</p> <p>Students to provide their final feedback</p> <p>Reimbursement of student travel expenses and/or bursary payment (if applicable)</p>
				<p>Invitation to attend a celebration event</p>

Help with your application

We often get asked what makes a good application. Below are some hints and tips, together with a short activity to get you thinking about how to prepare an application for a Nuffield Research Placement.

One of the sections where you'll have the chance to make most impact is your personal statement. When applying for a job or a place on a course, writing about your experiences and interests on the application form is the first opportunity you have to introduce yourself to the recruiter or admissions tutor. Remember, the person reading the form doesn't know you, so it's important to explain your interests and ideas clearly and concisely. You don't want them to become bored reading through a long-winded life history but, equally, your statement shouldn't be so brief that the reader feels that you haven't been bothered enough to give sufficient detail.

If you're applying for a Nuffield Research Placement, it doesn't matter if you don't have any experience; that's what the Nuffield project is for! At this stage, all you need is enthusiasm for your subject.

Key points to consider

The local Nuffield Coordinator is responsible for selecting students for placements in their region. Remember that, unlike your tutors/teachers, they have no knowledge about your potential for the programme other than what you include in your application. The personal statement is your opportunity to showcase yourself and demonstrate your suitability for a placement. Generally speaking, there are three main areas that the coordinators are looking for you to include in a 'good' application:

1. A convincing account of **why** you want to undertake a placement and **what you hope to gain** from the Nuffield experience.
2. Information about the **subjects that interest you** and **why you enjoy them**.
3. A description of the **qualities and skills you can bring to a placement** that will help you to be successful.

Hints and tips

- Be sure to write full, coherent sentences in English and check your spelling and grammar; remember, this is your first chance to impress the Nuffield Coordinator.
- Try to be concise in your personal statement. We recommend keeping the statement to within 500 words.
- Think about what you want to say *before* you fill in the form; don't just put down the first thing that comes into your head. If it helps, you can write down notes or ideas on a draft version first. Remember you can always come back and tweak it before you submit your final application.
- Make the most of your interests and experiences. If you did really well in a school competition, say so! If you've done something related and science-y or educational in your spare time, (like visited a museum, read an article, listened to a podcast, watched a non-fiction TV documentary etc.) put it in.
- Before submitting your application, check it carefully for any mistakes; it's always a good idea to ask a friend, family member or teacher to proof-read what you've written.

If you think it would be helpful to run through the quick activity to help you understand more about writing a personal statement you can do that on the next page.

ACTIVITY: Personal Statement

Look at the application extracts below and think about three positive and three negative things about each submission.

Explain below why you think you would benefit from a Nuffield Research Placement. You might mention, for example, whether there are any particular areas of science that interest you, what your career plans are and any previous experience you've had that might be relevant.

Example One

I like science and want to find out more about doing science at university. At school I like learning about genetics in biology so I want to see what it's like to work in this area. At school I find experiments really interesting, and so I would like to see what it's like to do research for real. After school I want to get a job in science if I like what I do at uni.

Example Two

I think that I'm interested in Chemistry and might like to do it at university, but I probably want a career in Finance in the end. Maybe the placement will help me decide what I want to do. At school, I go to the science club and I like that, which is why I have applied for this placement.

Application One

Positive points	Negative points
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Application Two

Positive points	Negative points
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Supplementary questions

The questions below can help you think about your own personal statement, what you might want to include and how you want it to come across to those who read it, i.e. your Nuffield Coordinator, the teacher who will provide your reference and, if you are successful, your Project Supervisor.

- Who is going to read your application; how might this affect your choice of language?
- What style of writing is appropriate for this task?
- What words or phrases could you use to demonstrate your enthusiasm?
- How would you make your application different from and better than the two examples provided?

Having answered these questions, have a go at writing your own personal statement. Try to compare your work to the two examples and think about the following:

- Which do you prefer and why?
- Are there any sections of your statement that stand out better than others?
- Is there anything that needs to be removed from or added to your statement?

Advice for unsuccessful or ineligible applicants

Nuffield Research Placements are highly competitive and inevitably many applicants will either be unsuccessful or fail to meet the eligibility criteria. If this is the case, don't panic; there are still plenty of other STEM-related enrichment opportunities you can get involved in:

- [National Careers Service](#); A great starting point for information about careers, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities.
- [Student Ladder](#); Providing useful advice and links to UK-based organisations offering summer placements.
- [STEM Ambassador](#); Ask your teacher about arranging a visit to your school from an ambassador with a science, technology, engineering or maths background.
- [British Science Association](#); Find out about CREST Awards, which can be used towards UCAS personal statements and Duke of Edinburgh programmes.
- [Leaders Award for STEM](#); An excellent way of finding out more about scientific and technical careers. Leaders Awards for STEM can link up with CREST Awards.
- **Teens in AI**; Explore Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning and data science, and check out the [Teens in AI Accelerator](#) programme.
- [Young Scientists Journal](#) / [Journal of Young Investigators](#); There are lots of different ways to get involved with these online publications, written by and for young scientists.
- [IRIS](#); Ask your school to sign up (for free!), so that you can take part in one of the many science research projects.
- [nQuire-it](#); Carry out investigations into the physical world using the Sense-it app, which can be downloaded to any smart device.
- [Future Morph](#); Check out the Science Council's website for information about careers in STEM.

Appendix 1: Bursary and travel expense information

By taking part in the Nuffield Research Placements programme, we want to make sure that all students and their families are not out of pocket. This means that all students are reimbursed for reasonable travel costs and **some** students may also be eligible for a bursary.

Travel expenses and bursary payments **relate only to the on-site* portion of the placement**; the pre-project independent study support package does not qualify for any reimbursement.

Bursary eligibility

Students are eligible for a bursary if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- In receipt of, or entitled to, discretionary payments at school/college
- From a home with a combined income of below £30,000 per year
- Are in receipt of, or entitled to, Free School Meals, or have been in the last six years
- Living, or has lived, in local authority care in the last six years.

Please note: We may ask the student/their families for proof of the above to confirm eligibility. This documentation could include:

- Evidence of your family's annual income, such as all relevant P60 forms
- Formal confirmation from the educational institution who has approved the school/college discretionary funds
- Formal confirmation from your local authority of the student's receipt to Free School Meals
- Formal confirmation from social services regarding the care status of the student either currently or over the last six years.

Bursary payments

If a student is eligible for the bursary, they are entitled to receive £200 for the duration of the **on-site*** part of their placement only. As the on-site activity should take approximately 10 working days in total, i.e. two weeks, the total bursary payment amount works out at £100/week per student.

**Due to the impact of COVID-19 and Government guidance and subject to the limitations of the placement host organisation, the real-world research collaboration with a Project Supervisor may not be able to go ahead on-site. In the event that on-site research is not possible, this activity will continue online instead. In this case, the bursary will not be affected, and students will still be entitled to receive the full bursary amount of £200.*

What if the on-site portion of the placement goes over two weeks?

If the on-site activity has to be extended to three weeks, the student should discuss with their Nuffield Coordinator whether they would be applicable for a further £100 bursary payment.

Please note that these requests are not guaranteed to be accepted and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

If you would like to discuss any of the above, please contact your Nuffield Regional Coordinator. You can find out who your local coordinator is [here](#).