



NINE

Doctoral Training Partnership

Overseas Institutional Visits Scheme Guidelines

// Policy

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The NINE DTP Overseas Institutional Visit (OIV) Scheme is designed to “support and encourage the international engagement of ESRC funded students” (*ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guidelines*, pg. 26). It provides an opportunity for a NINE DTP award-holder to spend up to three months with a Higher Education institution (or an organisation with a substantive research office outside of the UK) for the purposes of networking, research dissemination, to develop language skills, or to undertake special research training or activities which are not available within the UK.

Funds may be sought to provide an extension of up to three months to the period of funded study, plus travel and accommodation costs.

Applications are considered biannually. The number of awards made per annum depends on the resource available. Award-holders need to provide a strong justification for their proposed visit and for the level of funding support requested.

PURPOSE

In accordance with ESRC guidance, funds may be used to provide financial support and time for award-holders to:

- undertake additional specialist research training not available in the UK
- develop language skills
- establish research links that will be beneficial to their current or future academic career
- disseminate early research career findings
- attend and participate in seminars where directly relevant to their work.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Award-holders wishing to take up an OIV may apply for the following financial support:

- a) Up to 3 months extension to the period of funded study, paid at the standard studentship rate. Applicants may apply for an extension only if they are able to demonstrate that the proposed activities of the OIV incur significant time costs additional to those normally associated with completing the PhD. For the avoidance of doubt, thesis writing, attending workshops and other training events, and presenting research at conferences are activities normally associated with most PhDs;
- b) Additional funding of *up to* £4,000 to meet the costs of specific expenses arising from the scheme, including travel and accommodation costs.

ELIGIBILITY AND CRITERIA

In order to be eligible for funding, the following key criteria need to be met:

- Applications must be led by the award-holder.
- Visits must be related to the completion of the award-holder's PhD and should not commence within the first three months of the studentship period. Visits taking place in the final year of the studentship must be completed at least three months before the end date of the award and prior to the extension period being implemented.
- Award-holders in the initial 'training' year of a 1+3 award are ineligible.
- The purpose of the visits funded must not be for overseas fieldwork as this is supported through other funding mechanisms.
- Visits can last for up to a maximum of 13 weeks.
- Visits must involve visiting a Higher Education institution, or an organisation with a substantive research office outside of the UK.
- Visits must not be undertaken if the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against visiting the country concerned (for further guidance, see <https://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>).
- Award-holders can receive funding for a maximum of one OIV, although they may apply on more than one occasion if unsuccessful.
- Applicants must be registered as full-time for the duration of the OIV.
- Applicants in receipt of an OIV award will be required to meet any institutional travel requirements before funds are released, such as completing risk assessments or obtaining travel insurance.
- Successful applicants are required to provide a brief (max 2 pages) report on their activities and the outcomes of their OIV within one month of their return to the UK.

In addition, NINE DTP requires applicants to be aware of the following guidance:

- Award-holders are encouraged to consider shorter OIVs.
- In order to widen opportunities with the limited resource available, NINE DTP would not expect an award-holder to receive funding for both a placement and an OIV; candidates should consider this when preparing any bids and prioritise accordingly.
- Where funds provided are insufficient to cover the full costs of the planned activities, an award-holder may apply to use RTSG funds to supplement the cost of their OIV.
- As with all award-holder expenditure, retrospective applications cannot be considered under any circumstances. No expenditure should be committed in advance of formal approval from NINE DTP.
- Applicants may wish to structure their OIV around multiple visits to the same institution over an extended period of time; however, the funding limitations still apply, and the cost of multiple flights would need to be factored in to any such proposal. Justification for multiple visits would need to be provided.
- Applications that can demonstrate the building of new networks and/or significant value-added to the host institution or academics may be viewed favourably.

// Process

An open call for applications from eligible award-holders is held biannually.

Deadlines for applications: 4pm on **1 October** and **1 April**.

Candidates should allow up to three months between the call deadline and the start of their visit. Applications should be submitted using the NINE DTP Additional Funding Form (available via the NINE DTP website) in advance of the deadline.

DEVELOPING AN OIV APPLICATION

Award-holders and their supervisors are encouraged to explore possible OIVs with potential host organisations. NINE DTP can provide award-holders and their supervisors with advice where appropriate.

Applicants should present a clear and concise case as to how the proposed activities will benefit their doctoral research, completion of their thesis, their progression towards academic or non-academic careers, and their personal and professional development. Applicants should also consider any added value to the host institution and/or academic(s).

The case for support should address how the proposed activities align with the intended outcomes of the scheme (defined above). For example, where appropriate applicants should indicate clearly how, where and to whom they will disseminate their research; alternatively, they might present a case for the quality and relevance of the training on offer and how it is unique to the host institution.

All applications should provide a clear and realistic programme and timetable of activities. OIVs that involve activities normally expected of a PhD programme (e.g. writing up the thesis, short training programmes, conference presentations, seminars, workshops) would not normally be considered as eligible for an extension to the period of study. OIVs involving activities that bring significant additional time burdens and/or take time away from the completion of the PhD should seek an extension commensurate to the time lost. Requests for extensions should be fully justified and explained.

The application should be accompanied by a letter of support from the supervisor, confirming: i) that the applicant is making good progress with their PhD and is expected to complete on time; ii) that they are in full support of the application; iii) the anticipated benefits of the OIV to the applicant.

The application requires a clear statement of support from the host institution. This should confirm that they have agreed to host the award-holder, and that they will provide sufficient access to resources and facilities (including desk space) to undertake the OIV as planned. These letters should speak to the specifics of the applicant and their planned programme of activity, making clear the support to be offered.

Where specific training is required, evidence should be provided to demonstrate that the training is both relevant to the PhD research and above and beyond any training available within the UK. Any costs for the training should be stated and clearly evidenced.

FINANCIAL JUSTIFICATION

Applications should include a clear and thorough financial plan, with evidence of costs provided where appropriate; all costs should be as accurate and detailed as possible, and fully justified.

Applicants should indicate if they are likely to receive additional funding from alternative sources in support of the OIV.

Applicants should note that £4,000 is the upper limit of funding and value for money will be considered as part of the assessment process. Realistic and judicious spending plans are encouraged¹.

Funds may be requested to cover the following costs:

- Visa application /processes
- Flights
- Travel to and from the institution
- Insurance costs
- Accommodation
- Costs associated with research activities (conferences, seminars, etc.) where appropriate²

Other costs may also be met; please check with your DTP Administrator in the first instance if you have any queries (or email contact.nine@durham.ac.uk).

POST-APPLICATION PROCESS

Following receipt of an application and confirmation of eligibility, applications will be reviewed by a cross-institutional panel, including one member on NINE DTP with budget oversight. The panel may seek advice and feedback on an application from other academic or administrative members of staff at our partner universities. Applications will be reviewed against the scheme's essential criteria (see below).

The reviewing process will take *at least* three weeks, but may take longer if the DTP receives a significant number of applications.

The DTP Manager will inform applicants of the outcome of the review as soon as these are confirmed.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All applications for Overseas Institutional Visits will be considered and authorised by a panel of NINE DTP reviewers. The reviewers will rank the applications based on the following criteria:

- the purpose of the visit and value added to both the applicant and the host institution
- contribution towards the award-holder's research and/or training
- the intended work plan and programme of activities
- arrangements for continued supervision provided by the supervisor
- the case for support provided by the proposed host university
- support, facilities and resources provided by the host organisation
- supervisor's letter of support
- value for money.

In assessing applications, the panel will also consider the following:

- the location, length and cost of the proposed activity;
- the ethical and practical considerations which might have an impact on the proposal.

OVERSEAS INSTITUTIONAL VISIT TERMINATIONS

Should an award-holder be required to terminate their visit earlier than planned for any reason then they must notify the NINE DTP Administrator of their host institution immediately, detailing the reason for the termination. Following notification of termination, NINE DTP will liaise with the award-holder to complete the

¹ Award-holders are encouraged to remember that they will still be in receipt of a stipend throughout the OIV, which covers subsistence; this should be appropriately reflected in the costing of the application.

² Host institutions are not expected to charge costs for seminars and auditing classes, unless in exceptional circumstances.

termination and ensure successful resumption of their doctoral studies. In these circumstances the DTP will seek to return any unused funds that may have been disbursed to the award-holder.

MONITORING & REPORTING

During Overseas Institutional Visits award-holders will maintain contact with their supervisory team, who will continue to provide support and guidance.

The award-holder will be required to write brief (maximum two sides of A4) report on their activities and the learning outcomes of their visit within one month of the end of the OIV. The content should be suitable for presentation on the NINE DTP website, including appropriate images or visual media.

If an award-holder does not wish their report to be made public, they may choose to provide a written report for the attention of the DTP Directors only. Failure to report on the outcomes of an OIV in either of the above formats will result in the withholding of reimbursement unless suitable justification is provided.

Further Information

Contact	Stuart Gladwell
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Call	0191 33 41926