**PhD Internships at the Wales Centre for Public Policy**

Background

The Wales Centre for Public Policy is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Welsh Government and Cardiff University. It works with leading policy experts to provide ministers, the civil service and public services with high quality evidence and independent advice that helps them to improve policy decisions and outcomes. The Centre also undertakes research to advance understanding of the role which evidence can play in supporting better policy making and public service delivery. More information on the Centre is available here [www.wcpp.org.uk](http://www.wcpp.org.uk)

This is the third year of our PhD Internship Scheme which provides opportunities for ESRC funded PhD students located on Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) pathways within the Wales DTP institutions, to spend three months in the Centre to apply and develop their research skills and techniques to real-world issues with high topicality. These internships will provide an excellent opportunity for PhD students to gain practical experience of undertaking research in an organisation that works at the interface of research and policymaking. You will work alongside staff who have gained PhD’s and currently work with policy makers and practitioners in providing evidence to improve policy-making and public service outcomes in Wales. The experience of previous PhD students is summarised [here](https://www.wcpp.org.uk/commentary/phd-internships-learning-by-doing/).

The internship will increase the candidates’ understanding of policymaking in Wales as well as improve their research skills (e.g., literature searching/reviewing, designing a research plan). You will also have the chance to develop a wide range of practical skills (e.g. report writing, communication, time management, team working, developing impact strategies) that will be crucial for your future career. The internship will also allow the candidate to extend their network amongst academics, policy makers and practitioners in Wales and beyond.

We have outlined two types for students to consider:

1. An internship which supports our work with Welsh Government and/or public services. You will work in a team of researchers focused on a topic designed in collaboration with our Funders. Some examples of recent projects are given in the section below on 'Focus of the Internship'
2. An internship which examines the role of evidence in policymaking. This could be in a particular policy field of your PhD (e.g., previous interns have studies equalities policy and farming) or more generally. Some potential research questions are provided below.

Alternatively, students may propose a topic of their own choice, applying their PhD interests and expertise to a policy area within which WCPP has conducted work. For topics proposed by students, their eligibility will be based on their resonance with WCPP’s current interests. So please keep that in mind when designing your proposal. If you are considering proposing your own topic, please contact Prof James Downe [James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk](mailto:James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk) at an early stage to discuss the scope and shape of any proposal before you submit it.

Student specification

For each internship, we would expect the student to have:

* Strong research and analytical skills including experience of undertaking literature reviews and qualitative methods (e.g., semi-structured interviews).
* Experience of analytical work in the areas of social or public policy.
* An interest in writing concise, well-written documents e.g., blog posts, summaries of research etc. aimed at non-specialist audiences.

The WCPP and the ESRC Wales DTP are committed to supporting and promoting equality, diversity, and an inclusive research environment. We value the indispensable contribution made by researchers of all backgrounds to our work. We warmly welcome applications for these internships from currently underrepresented groups, including students/researchers with disabilities, and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities.

Length and start date of the internship

The internship would last for a period of three months and be based in the Wales Centre for Public Policy at sbarc|spark in Cardiff University. Staff are currently working in the office for at least two days a week. For students registered on a part-time studentship, the internships are available on a part-time basis, and this will need to be negotiated with the project lead.

We are flexible on the start date of the internship as this will depend on individual circumstances, but we anticipate this to be May 2023. There is also a possibility of starting in September 2023 if this fits into your PhD better.

Funding and costs

The successful applicant will get a paid extension of three months to their PhD at an indicative monthly rate of £1,855 per month (fees and stipend costs).

Reasonable travel and accommodation costs for students not normally based in Cardiff can be met by the Wales Centre for Public Policy. Requests should be consistent with Wales DTP guidelines. It would not usually be expected that a Cardiff registered student would need to reclaim travel/accommodation expenses. Applications from students requiring additional funding for travel and accommodation will not be treated less favourably. For any queries on this please contact Carole Baker at the Wales DTP on: [enquiries@walesdtp.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@walesdtp.ac.uk)

Focus of the internship

1. Supporting our work with Welsh Government and/or public services

We are seeking a PhD student who can bridge the worlds of research and policy and is committed to producing high quality, policy relevant research and analysis. This internship offers a unique opportunity to obtain first-hand experience of producing policy relevant research, working closely with leading academics, senior policymakers, and public services.

You will contribute to an assignment for Welsh Government ministers and public services. Tasks may include synthesising literature on a topic, planning the project, identifying and commissioning an expert, drafting/editing a report, and communicating the findings through a blog and/or organising an event. You will be mentored by a member of the Centre’s senior staff.

We have worked on a wide range of topics in the last year including:

* Net zero – impacts and mitigating actions
* Net zero skills – overview of evidence and sector engagement
* International approaches to just transition and similarities/differences with environmental justice
* International evidence review of regulatory models for building safety
* Defining, measuring, and monitoring Democratic Health in Wales
* A review of policy responses and strategic interventions to address population decline and population ageing
* Welsh Government Basic Income pilot
* Public sector procurement and social value.

We will be working with the Welsh Government and public services to select projects that we will be undertaking in the coming months. You will have the opportunity to work on one of these new projects.

If you have any questions relating to this internship, please direct these to Prof James Downe [James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk](mailto:James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk)

2. The role of evidence in policymaking

There is a growing need amongst knowledge brokering organisations, like the Wales Centre for Public Policy, and other organisations that support public service improvement, to better understand how evidence is mobilised. Researchers now reject simplistic models of evidence use in favour of more nuanced accounts, that recognise evidence as only one part of complex policy processes. These processes involve interactions amongst multiple actors that are influenced by institutional norms, values, beliefs, and politics. All of these factors affect how evidence is mobilized, translated, and used in policymaking and service design/delivery.

The project will build upon our existing work on [knowledge brokers](https://doi.org/10.1332/030557319X15740848311069) to improve understanding of how and when research-derived knowledge and expertise can inform policy and practice (at both the national or local level). This project could involve studying policy-evidence communities around a policy area or examining the policy-evidence communities within a local area. The candidate might explore some of the following research questions:

* Which mechanisms work best in encouraging the generation, transmission, and use of evidence?
* How is research-derived evidence mobilised, translated, used, or ignored in policymaking and practice?
* What is the impact of knowledge brokers on policy and public services?
* Who are the actors involved in a policy-evidence community?
* How does the composition and function of evidence-policy communities in Wales compare with similar communities in England or Scotland?

The internship should closely link with the focus of your PhD interests so you are able to hit the ground running and complete the activities within three months. We will work with the candidate to decide upon the final research question and design a draft research plan before starting work in the Centre.

The researcher will be involved in documentary analysis, literature review, interviews or case study analysis and writing up the findings. A short report (approx. 12 pages) summarising the approach taken and outlining the findings should be produced and published on the website. The project will aim to have impact with policy/practitioners as well as academic audiences as it will generate new knowledge about the role of evidence in policymaking. The report will be presented in an accessible way to help to ensure that the research is used. A blog summarising the research will also be drafted to be included on the Centre’s website. The researcher will also be involved in other activities to raise awareness of the research and its translation into policy/practice.

If you have any questions relating to the project, please direct these to Dr Hannah Durrant [Hannah.Durrant@wcpp.org.uk](mailto:Hannah.Durrant@wcpp.org.uk)

Application process

We welcome applications from students on *all* DTP pathways. If you are interested in these internships, you should first discuss this opportunity with your supervisor and get their approval. We also strongly advise you to contact the person named above who will supervise each internship.

Please send a letter of application and a CV to enquiries@walesdtp.ac.uk by **Friday 28th April 2023.** Each document should be no more than two sides of A4. Your letter should state which internship you are interested in, confirm that you have the agreement of your main supervisor, specify a suggested start date, and include how you feel the internship would be of benefit to your Doctoral programme. For the first type of internship where you will work on a Welsh Government/public services project, please outline the policy areas where you have most interest in working on. If your preference is for the internship on the role of evidence in policy-making, please outline your ideas on the proposed methodological approach to the study and ideas on ways to disseminate the findings.

There will likely be an interview as part of the selection process, and these will take place by Zoom or MS Teams.