



Exeter
INNOVATION

Sponsor a PhD



What is a Sponsored PhD?

A sponsored PhD or Industrial Studentship is a mechanism in which businesses and organisations can support a PhD student to research a topic that benefits the business's innovation or policy aims.

Industrial Studentships are a collaborative, early-stage 'Blue Sky' research partnership (usually Technology Readiness Level TRL1-3) between an industry partner, the University of Exeter and a Postgraduate Research (PhD) Student.

It is a 3-4 year project, whereby a PhD student is recruited jointly with the business and University, and their research focuses on a topic agreed with the organisation and academic supervisor.



During a Sponsored Studentship



- The PhD student researches a challenge directly relating to the industry partner's needs.
- Our industrial partners gain in-depth insight, allowing them to develop and innovate their organisation.
- PhD students can spend 3+ months at your company premises, enabling them to understand your business needs and embed the knowledge gained from the PhD into your organisation.
- The business develops new and existing relationships with Professors and their academic groups, opening up new opportunities for grant-funded research.
- Provides a recruitment opportunity for both the company and student following project completion.

Key Information



How long does an industrial studentship last?

A full-time Industrial Studentship lasts 36, 42 or 48 Months, depending on the project scope and the organisation's needs. The period should allow around six months of 'writing up' time for the thesis.

Industrial Studentships can be arranged as part-time with any FTE between (0.5-1FTE). Part-time study will extend the overall period of the studentship.

Where are the students based, and who are their supervisors?

The student is usually based at the University, but they can be co-located with the industry partner either on a regular or placement basis.

The student is supervised by two academics and a company Supervisor.



What about Intellectual Property (IP)?

Due to its charitable status and position as a government-funded organisation, the University is governed by 'subsidy control' law. The University's IP positions must comply with this:

- Fully funded Industrial Studentships: The industry partner may own all of the arising foreground IP for commercial and/or non-commercial purposes. The University will need to retain a non-exclusive license to the arising foreground IP for teaching and non-commercial research purposes.
- Partially funded Industrial Studentships: Where match funding has been secured (e.g. through UKRI or the University), the University and industry partner will agree on the ownership and licensing of the arising foreground IP on fair and reasonable terms, for example, joint ownership of anything jointly created, or Exeter owning any changes or improvements to the methodology and the company owning the research findings and applications in the sector.



Do students have to publish their research?

Unlike some other pathways for research collaboration (e.g. consultancy), students must be able to publish a thesis based on their research work at the end of the project. If necessary, the published work can be nuanced to protect commercially sensitive information – e.g. the results can be presented from models developed using generic data rather than the partner's data.

Under some circumstances, the industry partner may arrange a delay in publication of the thesis of up to 6 months following the project's completion to make arrangements for the protection of any valuable foreground IP arising.

How does recruiting work?

The University recruits a student, often a recently qualified graduate or employee at the company, to undertake the PhD research project.

If the company has identified a candidate and fully funds the PhD, the student can be named in the contract rather than recruited. All students must apply for the programme through the University website and meet academic requirements.

1st October is the most common student start date, as March–July is the best time to recruit students; however, the University can enrol students throughout the year.

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How much does an Industrial Studentship cost?

The total cost of delivering a 3-4 year Industrial Studentship varies between £95k-£140k for a UK student and £130k-£200k for an EU/international student due to higher international student fees.

Funding must cover the fees, stipend, and research training support grant (RTSG) associated with a studentship. The company may also provide the student with additional funding as part of their agreement with the student.

Projects may receive match funding from the University on a case-by-case basis.

The company can pay in annual, biannual or quarterly instalments or in full upfront.

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Questions?

For general enquiries, contact

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