

Distributed Algorithms CDT Placements - guidance for students and partners

Partners of the CDT offer PhD's a placement as part of the student's core PGR training. Placements provide students with a valuable training opportunity to further develop and apply their technical, professional and transferable skills; and partners with access to the PhD research expertise to address some tough data science challenges.

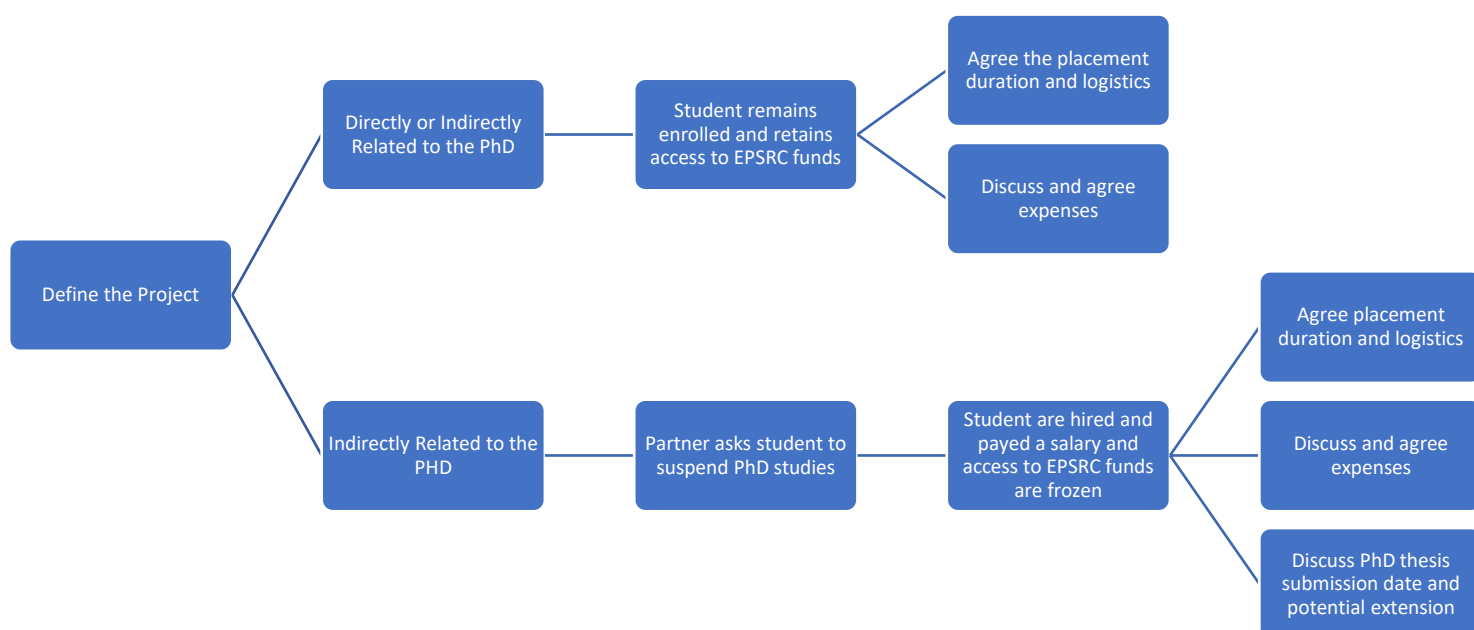
What to expect

Placements are either:

- **Directly related to the PhD**
 - Students remain enrolled as a student, continue to work towards their PhD and receive their PhD stipend.
- **Indirectly related to the PhD**
 - Students remain enrolled as a student, continue to work towards their PhD and receive their PhD stipend; or
 - Students are asked by the partner to suspend their studies (and extend their PhD thesis submission deadline), become an employee of and be paid by the partner. ¹

The timing and duration of placements vary and should be agreed between the project team. Students are typically in their third year and are asked to:

- Re-locate for a short period of time (1-6 months).
- Visit the partner's site for X weeks per month for X number of months.
- Visit on occasion to access data and provide progress reports.
- Set-up frequent virtual meetings and work remotely from Liverpool on placement tasks.



Some common experiences and remedies

Some logistical challenges can be avoided if the project team discusses and plans the placement in year 1 (or with as much time as possible).

Experience	Potential issues	Remedies
Start date delay	Placements take time to plan. If the planning is rushed, the start date will often be postponed (specifically if an employment contract needs setting up)	Once the placement details are confirmed, build-in at least a 1-2 months of time to process the logistics such as: risk assessments, travel and accommodation bookings, and (if the student is asked to suspend studies) arrange the employment contract.
Student remains enrolled	If students are not asked to suspend studies and be paid by the partner, the student continues to have access to the EPSRC funds to pay for some or all of the placement expenses; partners are asked to pay a share of the placement expenses if possible.	Travel, subsistence and accommodation expenses need to be estimated and discussed. Specifically, what is the estimated total and who will pay for what. Have this agreement in writing (email is great).
Partner pays a salary	If the partner asks the student to suspend studies, hires the student as an employee and pays a salary, the student can no longer access EPSRC funds to support their living and placement expenses.	The salary should be equivalent to the market rate for the position and no less than the student's stipend. Also, the partner will be asked to pay for expenses in addition to the salary (relocation expenses and travel).
Accommodation expense	If students are asked to undertake a longer-term placement and work at the partner's site for X number of months, student will need to rent accommodation (which means students may have two sets of accommodation – one in Liverpool and one at the partner's location).	Options to avoid double rental expense: Plan placements when student's rental contract lapses; Consider coordinating with another PhD student and go together or one after the other to save costs; Find affordable accommodation (Uni halls have offer good deals during Summer months); Be mindful of special events in the area that might impact on short term rental costs (i.e. Edinburgh festival and July/Aug Edinburgh rentals will be at a premium).
Visits and Clearance	Facilitating these activities take time and should be planned in advance	Partners should consider giving students a zero-hour contract from the start to facilitate these activities longer-term.

For Partners

If a partner prefers the student suspends their studies and opts to pay the student a salary, there are potentially two ways to contract for the student's time:

1. **Directly with the student as an employee:** Traditional employment contract between the student and the partner
 - a. The student suspends their PhD study and all financial support will be frozen during the placement.
 - b. The student and partner must agree:
 - i. A suitable time to start so the student does not incur double rental fees; and
 - ii. If the partner plans to cover any expenses.
 - c. Consider setting up a zero-hour contract with the student at the start of the PhD to facilitate the longer-term placement options.
2. **Indirectly with the student via the University's consultancy team (option tbc).** The student will act as an advisor or technical service provider. The partner and University would set up a technical service or advisory contract. The student would act as a contractor and the primary supervisor would be responsible for oversight and delivery of the work (who will also be named in the contract and a nominal fee provided).
 - a. The student fee rates will be based on either the market rate for the position or the average postdoctoral rates (equivalent to ~ £100k/year) whichever is more.
 - b. During the placement, the University will give the PhD student University employee status, manage the contract and invoices (which will incur VAT) and transfer payment to the student for their services.
 - i. The student's access to stipend will be frozen and the individual may have a gap in monthly income due to the complexity of university admin processes and payments.
 - c. Any or all of the expenses can be paid for (in advance) by the University and reimbursed by the partner via the invoice.
 - d. The University can pay for a share of the placement expenses using the non-EPSC funds.

ⁱ This type of placement is often related to a proprietary piece of work that is commercially sensitive**. PhD students are asked to suspend studies and will not receive their regular stipend. The student will become an employee of the partner and is offered a salary that equivalent to the market rate for the position and no less than the student's stipend. The student will have the option to extend the thesis deadline (equivalent to the duration of the placement).

If students suspend studies and work as an employee for their partner, the partner often will want to own the outputs created during the placement. Students and supervisors should be mindful of using any of the techniques or tools you've developed during your research (which is considered University Background Intellectual Property (IP)).

To ensure fairness and transparency, draft a one-page summary of the work that describes the overview of the placement project including the aims, objectives and expected outcomes. If students plan to use valuable research techniques or tools that were generated before the placement and are integral to the delivery of the work, create a list of the Background IP as part of the summary and provide a copy to Kelli and the partner in the first instance.