



COLLABORATORY
Research Hub

Guidance for Teams Submitting Research Placement Project Proposals

Research Project Co-Creation, Cohort 2027



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1. KEY INFORMATION

1.1. Making a Submission

All project proposal submissions must be received through our online proposal submission form. There is one form for Research Placement projects and one for PhD projects. Any submissions sent in any format other than through the online form will not be considered.

- All Collaboratory project proposals are expected to be the result of collaborative efforts between academic and community partners.
- The named Lead Academic supervisor should coordinate the completion and submission of the proposal form. This is because we ask for some university-specific information that community partners will not know.
- The online form allows you to save your progress and return later, but it is recommended that proposals are drafted in a separate word document.
- An offline copy of the proposal form questions is available to download from our website. This is for planning purposes only.
- Peer reviews are not required for Research Placement Proposals
- Please be aware of minimum and maximum word counts. All word limits include citations.

1.2. Deadline

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm Monday 07 September 2025

Submission forms will automatically close after the deadline. All project teams will be notified of outcomes by 01 October 2026.

2. OVERVIEW OF COLLABORATORY RESEARCH PLACEMENT STUDENTSHIPS

Collaboratory's Research Placement projects are an integral part of our work to create a comprehensive cycle of community engaged research. They provide an opportunity for exploration into emerging community centred research projects, as well as a vital development opportunity for promising candidate for whom more traditional routes into research are not accessible.

A significant barrier to entering research for people who don't fit the more stereotypical and narrow PhD candidate mould is often not a lack of skill, motivation or potential, but rather a lack of accessible and inclusive opportunities. For most people, unless you have the good fortune to have the resources of time, money or connections, opportunities to gain experience of the complex worlds of research and academia can be limited.

Additionally, within the academic sector, there are limited opportunities to explore nascent project ideas with new collaborative partners, which can limit the development of researchers and prevent community partners from being able to find effective and meaningful ways to be a part of collaborative research.

To address these barriers and the aims of our wider work, Collaboratory has specifically developed the Research Placement scheme as a new research project format.

Our cohort-based Research Placement studentship scheme is a pioneering initiative developed through many hours of specialist insight and support. Each project and its candidate represent an investment of approximately £6,000 by Collaboratory.

For Academic and Community Supervisors

For teams of university researchers and community partners, a Research Placement is an opportunity to build upon new research project ideas by gathering preliminary data, carrying out initial scoping work, and putting together a clearer picture of a local community/civic need.

For Candidates

Research Placements are only open to candidates without previous research experience (whether professional or from postgraduate stud). They are designed to give candidates an opportunity to gain direct experience of research, to develop their skills in an academic setting, and for some, to prepare for a future PhD studentship application.

2.1. Research Placement Structure

The table below gives an approximate outline of the Research Placement structure, however, this will differ between projects, depending on the needs of the research and the candidate.

Year	Activity
4 weeks before	• Candidate 3-month work plan is finalised. • Academic supervisors apply for ethical approval, where necessary. • All supervisors develop initial list of resources that candidates will engage with when starting to develop their background knowledge of the project.
Week 1	• Mandatory Collaboratory-led candidate inductions • Half day, full cohort induction to the programme • Research skills training crash course • Candidate has Inception Meeting with the project supervisory team • Candidate begins background reading and conversations to grow their understanding of the project, relevant academic theory and practical concepts.
Week 2-3	• Candidate reviews academic literature to identify gaps and opportunities. • Finalising plans for research activities.
Week 4-9	• Carrying out data collection through relevant research methods. • Beginning data analysis. • Beginning work on the final outputs.
Week 10-12	• Writing of final outputs, as defined at the start of the project. • Candidate has Debrief Meeting with supervisory team to discuss findings and potential further opportunities for themselves and the research.
1 week after	• Full cohort of candidates present 10-min presentations about their findings to an audience of primarily community and civic sector colleagues as part of an online showcase event. • Final written reports may be submitted up to 4 weeks after formal placement completion date.

2.2. Research Placement Outputs

Each Research Placement candidate will need to deliver an academic-style written report and a summary presentation to successfully complete the Placement.

The suitability of final outputs will be determined by the Research Placement supervisors, similarly to how a PhD thesis is assessed through discussion and constructive feedback, rather than by formal grading. The candidate is then determined to have either passed or failed based on the submission of satisfactory outputs.

Research Placement outputs are not only intended to act as exercises for candidates to develop essential skills for engaged research, but also to act as useful resources for the supervisory team. Therefore, all supervisory teams will need to identify the most appropriate style of written report and what kinds of content should be included, etc., depending on the needs of the community and academic supervisors, the needs of the project, and scope and duration of the project.

Output Type	Details
Academic-Style Written Report	• Approx 3,500-8,500 words. • Any format, as appropriate for the project. • To be sent to Collaboratory on completion. • Latest Submission Deadline: 4 weeks after the end of the placement.
Summary Presentation	• This will be delivered by the candidate at the final online showcase event at the end of their placement. • Presentation should be concise, written in accessible language for a non-specialist audience. • Each presentation will be short, only 5mins long with 5mins for questions, and should briefly give an overview of the project and what the key learnings have been. • More detailed guidance will be provided to candidates once they start. • Latest Submission Deadline: final, amended presentation can be submitted up to 4 weeks after the end of the placement.

On successful completion, Research Placement candidates will receive formal certification of their work, which is equivalent to an FHEQ Level 7.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1. General Criteria

- Proposals must address one or more of the 2026 Community Priorities for Research, for the relevant programme chapter. These details are available on the main cohort 2027 proposals webpage.
- All supervisory partners named on a proposal must attend an information webinar or review the webinar recording.
- Where possible, we will be prioritising new teams that have not yet engaged with Collaboratory, but the following will apply:
 - Academic supervisors who have previously or are currently acting as Lead Academic Supervisor for a Collaboratory PhD project are NOT eligible to be named as Lead Supervisors for Research Placements or PhDs for Cohort 2027.
 - Academic colleagues who have previously or are currently acting as Academic Co-Supervisors are eligible to be named as Lead Academic Supervisors on either PhDs or Research Placement proposals.
 - Civic and community partner organisations who have previously or are currently acting as Community Supervisors are not eligible to be the primary Community Supervisory partner but may be named as secondary partners or informal advisors.
- We will NOT consider proposals with a majority focus on artificial intelligence (AI) or engineering specialist approaches. This is due to significant, sector-wide recruitment challenges leaving Collaboratory stipends unable to compete with entry-level salaries in engineering and AI fields.
 - Proposals that touch on AI or engineering in a minor way may still be eligible; please speak to a member of the Collaboratory team about suitability before submitting.

3.2. Supervisory Team Requirements

All Research Placement supervisory teams require the following named partners, as a minimum:

A lead Academic Supervisor

At least 1 Academic Co-Supervisor

At least 1 Community Supervisor

A formal representative of a local community-focused organization within either Nottinghamshire or Leicestershire.

Each supervisory team must include academic supervisors from at least 2 different institutions within the chapter. I.e., x2 different Nottingham universities or x2 different Leicestershire universities.

All supervisory team partners should be chapter specific. For example, for project proposals being submitted to the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Chapter of Collaboratory, academic supervisors should be from Nottingham Trent University and University, with a Community Supervisor from a Nottinghamshire-based organisation.

3.2.1. Academic supervisor requirements

- Unlike PhD projects, early career researchers and university staff in research related professional services roles are eligible to be named as Academic Supervisors on Research Placement proposals.
- All named academic supervisors must receive approval from their line manager to confirm that they have the capacity to take on the supervision of a Research Placement candidate from April to July 2027.
- As a minimum, each project supervisory team must have an academic lead and co-supervisor, both of whom should come from at least x2 different universities within the Chapter region.
 - For Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Chapter proposals, a combination of supervisors from any two of the Chapter's three universities will be suitable. It is not a mandatory requirement to have UoL, DMU, and LU represented on the supervisory team.
- Beyond the Lead Academic Supervisor and the Academic Co-Supervisor, additional academic co-supervisors may be named on the proposal, but only where relevant to the needs of the project (e.g., where further PGR supervision experience is needed, or a specific area of academic/practice expertise is needed).
 - **PLEASE NOTE:** As a collaborative programme, Collaboratory supervisory teams tend to be larger than other research projects. To mitigate the challenges that a larger supervisory team can present to Research Placement candidates, where any further co-supervisors are named on the team in addition to the lead and 1st co-supervisor, it must be clear what their unique and necessary contribution to the project will be.

3.2.2. Community Supervisor requirements

- Named Community Supervisors must hold an active, formal position with a community-focused organisation. This can be any form of formally contracted position where the named individual has relevant permission and responsibility to carry out work on behalf of the organisation.
- Named Community Supervisors must bring expertise from an area of practice relevant to the proposed project, based on their real-world, professional expertise and experience working with relevant communities. They can also provide access to defined communities, data, resources, etc., where relevant.
- Management and supervision experience is not necessary for someone to be named as a Community Supervisor – Collaboratory will provide necessary guidance and training for those on successful projects.
- If the proposal is successful, Community Supervisors will be required to engage in regular contact with the candidate, fellow supervisors, and Collaboratory. If the named person holds a more senior role where capacity for this engagement is limited, an additional colleague from the organisation should be named.

- To be eligible, a Community Supervisor's organisation must be based within the relevant Chapter's county region (Nottinghamshire or Leicestershire & Rutland), and must work with one or more defined communities within the region.
 - Organisations based outside of the chapter and/or who work with communities beyond the chapter region (i.e., national organisations) are not eligible to be the main Community Supervisor, however they may be included as secondary Community Supervisor or an informal advisory partner to the project.
- Collaboratory defines a community-focused organisation as any organisation whose primary function is to provide one or more services to defined communities, for the broader social good of the people and region.
 - Please see project profiles on our website for examples of previous and current Community Supervisory partner organisations.

3.3. Additional Considerations

- Priority will be given to projects that focus on community priorities not yet addressed by existing Collaboratory PhD or Research Placement projects.
- We are particularly interested in proposals with a life sciences, chemistry or physics subject focus.
- We are particularly interested in proposals which will employ engaged methodologies (i.e., participatory action methods or similar) which actively embed communities within the research process as equitable participants.

4. FUNDING OVERVIEW



4.1. Collaboratory's Research Placement Offering

All successful Research Placement project proposals selected to be funded by Collaboratory will receive a funding package comprising the following:

- A total stipend of £2,078 for successful candidates, paid in x3 monthly instalments.
- A total project resource budget of £200. This can be used towards covering candidate travel to research sites, attending a conference or event, catering for workshop, or research consumables such as participation incentives, etc. This fund cannot be used to be personal equipment or for PAYE costs.
- Support payments of £50 per half day for Community Supervisors to support their participation at essential events such as candidate shortlisting, interviews, induction, and regular project meetings.
- Research Placements candidates receive PhD-level access to either NTU or DMU (depending on the programme Chapter they are a part of).
- Extensive, specialist support and training for candidates, developed and delivered by the Collaboratory team, and researcher development teams at all partner universities.
- Specialist training, advice, and support for supervisory team members, developed and delivered by the Collaboratory team, and researcher development teams at all partner universities.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Any project costs that exceed the funding offering outlined above must be sourced by the project team from other sources. Details of any additional funding requirements must be outlined in the proposal submission form. **Proposals with unconfirmed and/or unfunded additional costs will NOT be considered.**

4.2. Conditions of Funding

The conditions below apply to all Research Placement project proposals which go on to be successfully selected for funding by Collaboratory.

- Collaboratory studentship funding (including candidate stipend and all other associated project funds) will be tied to the candidate recruited onto the project, and not the project team. Collaboratory will retain ultimate control of project funds.
- Funding and candidate start dates cannot be deferred. All projects must commence within the April 2027 intake period.
- All supervisory team members are expected to engage fully with Collaboratory's inclusive recruitment approach and mandatory training requirements. This is a core purpose of Collaboratory's funded work.
- All supervisory team members must attend the following, mandatory training requirements:
 - Inclusive candidate recruitment (1hr, online session).
 - Inclusive applicant assessment and interviews (1hr, online session).
 - Inclusive Supervision (1.5hrs, online). Required for Lead Academic Supervisors only but all other supervisors are encouraged to attend.
 - Research Placement Supervisors Induction (1hr, online session).
- The Collaboratory Research Placements Training Programme is designed as an in-person degree programme, only. While Collaboratory will be supportive of requests to work remotely or at-distance

for short periods of time when due to extenuating circumstances, candidates are expected to carry out their project in a manner consistent with standard in-person degree programmes.

- All successful Research Placement candidates will be required to engage fully with all mandatory training, tasks, and events that comprise Collaboratory's bespoke approach to researcher training and development, as a condition of their funding.
- **Collaboratory is more than just funder of research projects.** It is a holistic research programme that is funded to develop and trial a unique, inclusive, place-based and community-engaged approach to PhD-level research. Supervisory teams are expected to engage with and support this ethos, and to encourage and support their candidates to engage fully with the Collaboratory programme throughout their Research Placement.
- Continued disengagement from the Collaboratory programme or refusal to adhere to mandatory Collaboratory or local institutional processes by any member of the supervisory team may result in removal of individual supervisors, withdrawal of funding from the full supervisory team, or re-allocation of the candidate to a different supervisory team.

4.3. Key Dates

The following are key dates for teams whose proposals are successfully selected for funding.

- Refinement of candidate workplans: October-November 2026
- Candidate applications open: Monday 4th January 2027
- Candidate applications close: 11:59pm, Sunday 14th February 2027
- Applicant shortlisting panels:
 - Nottinghamshire Chapter – Wednesday 24th February 2027
 - Leicestershire Chapter – Thursday 25th February 2027
- Applicant interview period: 15th – 24th March 2027
- All successful Research Placement candidates start: Monday 19th April 2027

5. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

We strongly recommend that teams interested in submitting a project proposal explore the [profiles of our previous and current PhD research projects](#) to understand the nature and scope of the work we will fund. Each project profile also includes a link to our candidate profiles which allow you to learn more about the kind of people we recruit.

All proposals will be assessed by a panel comprising members of the Collaboratory team, academic researchers from relevant chapter universities, as well as members of local community-focused organisations. All proposed will be assessed against the following areas:

5.1. Project Focus

- Projects must seek to address one or more defined local challenges relevant to one or more defined local communities.
- Proposals can take the approach of any combination of academic disciplines.
- Each proposal must be of appropriate scope for a Research Placement project, which is expected to be carried out on a part-time basis, 14hrs per week for 12 weeks, continuous.

5.2. Community Basis

- Projects must demonstrate a strong and well-informed grounding in the needs of one or more defined local communities.
- The local challenge(s) which the project seeks to address must be explicit and clearly informed by relevant community practice and evidence.
- The community basis which the project seeks to address must explicitly align with the Community Priorities for Research, as detailed on our project proposals webpage.
- Projects must seek to address an area of genuine community/civic need. Collaboratory is looking to fund research centred around the nuances of place-based challenges and their relation to people and place, rather than research that could be carried out anywhere and just happens to be carried out in a local, regional setting.
- Evidence of collaboration and input from the Community Supervisor(s) in the development of the proposal must be made clear.
- The community context underpinning the proposal must be made explicit. Proposals where the connections to community/civic need are assumed or implicit will be ranked lower.

5.3. Academic Basis

- Projects must demonstrate a strong, logical academic basis which makes clear how the work will support the development of future engaged research work of any kind.
- There must be an academically robust justification for the proposed methods, and approaches.
- Sufficient detail about the proposed methods and approaches must be provided for their suitability to be judged in relation to the project's rationale, aims, and make-up of the supervisory team.
- Collaboratory is an interdisciplinary, "discipline agnostic" programme. As such, academic details should be written in accessible language to ensure that the range of colleagues on our selection panels can effectively understand and evaluate the proposal details.
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5.4. Feasibility and Potential

- Proposals should make it clear how the described work will support the development of future collaborative, community engaged research.
- All proposals must be realistically achievable within a 12-week timeframe and considering the type of candidate that this scheme will be targeting.
- Proposals must demonstrate a logical and realistic pathway for the project to deliver genuine, and meaningful impact for local communities.
- The impact and benefit of the research for to the Community Supervisor's organisation must be made explicit.
- Sufficient detail should be provided to rationalise how such impact would be achieved through the proposed project.
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5.5. Suitability of Supervisory Team

- Each project supervisory team must have an appropriate combination of relevant knowledge, skills, and expertise to guide a Research Placement Candidate in the defined research activities, and to ensure the project is successful.
- While early career researchers or other research-adjacent university staff are eligible to be lead supervisors on a Research Placement, in such cases, the co-supervisor(s) should have an appropriate level of prior supervisory experience.
- The balance of expertise from academic and community supervisors should be appropriate for the area of focus of the proposed research, and the wider needs of the project.
- Community Supervisor(s) and their organisation(s) should be appropriate partners for the described project and bring relevant experience and insights from their sector and practice.
- Supervisory teams must demonstrate how each named member has the experience and expertise necessary to ensure the project's success.

5.6. Additional Considerations

In addition to the criteria mentioned above, the selection panel will also need to consider the following factors when making funding decisions.

- The balance of topics being addressed by projects within each cohort portfolio.
- The wider strategic priorities of the overall Collaboratory programme.
- The employing institution of the lead academic supervisor.
 - This dictates where the candidate will be registered, if the project is successful. We have to fund x5 projects each for NTU and UoN, and x3 projects each for DMU, UoL and LU.

Please note that DMU, UoL, and LU academic leads for Collaboratory will be running an internal sift of proposals to ensure a strong range of submissions from each partner university. Details will be made available internally.

6. RESEARCH CANDIDATES



RECRUITMENT OF PLACEMENT

6.1. Recruitment Aims

Collaboratory's

A core area of work that Collaboratory is funded to undertake is to pilot new, evidence-based, inclusive recruitment mechanisms, with the aim of creating more accessible pathways into doctoral research for promising local candidates who might otherwise be excluded from more traditional academic opportunities.

It is essential that all named supervisory team members understand that aims of Collaboratory's work, as it pertains to candidate recruitment. All project teams whose proposals are successful in being selected for Collaboratory funding are expected to engage fully with our approach to PhD candidate recruitment. This is as a non-negotiable condition of Collaboratory funding.

Recruitment Aims

- To support promising local candidates with strong potential to succeed in PhD research to get onto and succeed in a PhD degree. Especially those classed as "non-traditional" candidates by the Higher Education sector.
- To develop, trial and implement novel, inclusive approaches to PhD candidate recruitment which enables anyone to apply and showcase their suitability for a PhD, regardless of how they acquired their skills and experience.

What do we mean by “non-traditional” candidates?

- Those with a non-linear career and/or a non-linear education pathway.
- Those who do not have “standard entry” qualifications, i.e., 2.1 at Undergraduate or 2.2 at Undergraduate with a Masters.
- Those with strong equivalent, or better, professional experience than an undergraduate degree.
- Those who would otherwise not have the opportunity to access PhD study, i.e., due to socio-economic status, family/caring responsibilities, other minoritised identity, etc.

6.2. Applicant Eligibility

6.2.1. General Eligibility Criteria

- Candidates must be at least 18 years of age or older at the time of application.
- Candidates must be able to reach the project’s host institution within no more than approximately 1 hour of travel.
- Those who have already completed a Research Placement with the Collaboratory Research Hub are not eligible to apply.
- Candidates must live in the UK as their country of permanent residence.
- Collaboratory CANNOT consider candidates who qualify as international students for the purposes of tuition fees.
- Candidates must be available to undertake the Research Placement for the full 3-month continuous period. Studentship start dates cannot be deferred.
- Candidates must be able to commit at least 14 hours per week to work on the research placement, if successful. How and when these hours are worked is flexible.
- Candidates must be able to easily travel to and from the host university throughout the duration of the Research Placement (usually no more than 1hr of travel, one way).
- Candidates must not be enrolled on any higher education degree by the start of the Research Placement period.
- We cannot consider applications from those who wish to study at distance/remotely.

6.2.2. Experience and Qualifications

- Candidates must not be a current, formal employee of any university partner and working in a research, or research supporting or affiliated role. This includes those working as research assistants, research technicians, and professional services roles directly supporting research, and similar roles. Those working in roles not affiliated with research, such as general administration, estates, catering, etc., may still apply.
- There is no minimum qualification requirement to apply.
- Candidates CANNOT apply if you they have any of the following qualifications or experience:
 - Masters by Research (Taught Masters will be accepted)
 - Masters degrees with a significant research component

- PhD, or any degree awarding the title of Doctor (i.e., Doctor of Medicine)
- Formal experience of research through a professional setting (i.e., previous employment as a research assistant or research technician)

6.2.3. Collaboratory's Competency Framework

All candidates are assessed against Collaboratory's inclusive competency framework. This framework has been designed to identify candidates with potential to succeed in community-engaged research, value skills and experiences that universities cannot teach but which are of value to the project and to moderate the value of skills and experiences that universities can and will teach candidates at Research Placement level.



Category	Competency
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Comprehension and evaluation	• Strong understanding of the project and its subject matter. • Analytical, researcher mindset with keen attention to detail. • Able to identify connections, patterns, gaps, and irregularities in information/data. • Able to interpret data/information confidently with logic and empathy to derive meaning.
Social and emotional	• Demonstrable experience of responding effectively to changing contexts, information and demands. • Ability to persevere in the face of challenges/failures and to remain constructive in developing solutions. • Demonstrable passion for learning with clear drive and curiosity to undertake this specific research project. • Motivations that align with the project and programme • Strong desire to make a positive community impact through the research. • Willingness to think deeply about complex concepts and engage with academic ideas and theory.
Preparedness and potential for success	• Experience of working, collaborating and communicating effectively with different stakeholders. • High level of self-motivation and ability to work with minimal guidance. • Strong organisational and time-management skills with the ability to balance and prioritise multiple tasks. • Able to identify the technical, personal, or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop these.
Community Context	• Appreciation/understanding of the importance of community insight and experience in the generation of new knowledge. • Awareness/understanding of the broader societal context related to the subject matter of the project.
Project Specific Competencies	• To be set by the project supervisory team.

6.3. Recruitment Process

6.3.1. Process overview

- Collaboratory will create a project advert based for the Collaboratory website based on the details provided in the proposal submission.
- The application window will run for 6 weeks and will include a series of in-depth pre-application support, webinars, and advice sessions.
- After closing, the Collaboratory team will run a basic eligibility check on applications before producing anonymised version that are shared with all supervisory teams to view.

- The Collaboratory team will chair a shortlisting panel where supervisory team members will be invited to support discussions to shortlist applicants for theirs and other projects. Decisions are made by consensus, by the group present on the day.
- Research Placement interviews are held online and led by panels comprising, at minimum, x1 academic and x1 community supervisor, and x1 member of the wider Collaboratory team. Final decisions are made by group consensus by the panel present on the day.

6.3.2. Marketing of studentships

Candidate recruitment is run centrally by the Collaboratory team with support from institutional academic leads for Collaboratory, and local institutional communications and marketing teams. This includes promotional messaging, applications, shortlisting, and interviewing.

Promotions will target local candidates via non-academic channels; primarily through promoted social media posts.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Support from Community Supervisors and their organisations is ESSENTIAL to successfully attract strong candidates with relevant skills. Community Supervisors of successful projects will be asked to support in disseminating details of the studentship opportunity through their relevant networks.

6.3.3. Project Adverts

All successful projects are advertised in a job advert-style format which provides a breakdown of core Collaboratory competencies, as well as project-specific essential and desired competencies.

Adverts will be written based on details submitted as part of the project proposal. Supervisory teams will be required to proof the advert descriptions to ensure accuracy with the original proposal.

To help you write an effective project summary and to define appropriate essential and desirable competencies, please see the following examples: [Example 1](#) and [Example 2](#)

Final project specific competencies may be edited by Collaboratory before advertising to align with our methods and wider approach to our work on candidate recruitment. Suggested project specific competencies which can reasonably learnt or attained throughout the course of the Research Placement programme, such as specific methodologies not possible to learn outside of academic settings, will not be included in the final advert.