

PhD Internships at the Wales Centre for Public Policy

Background

The Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) 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

This is the fourth year of our PhD Internship Scheme which provides opportunities for ESRC funded PhD students located on Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) pathways, 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 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. Previous PhD students have studied the following topics:

- [The Welsh Government's use of policy tools for mainstreaming equalities](#)
- [Collaboration and policy implementation at the local level in Wales](#)
- [Lived experience evidence in disability policy making](#)
- [What is the role of evidence in shaping suicide prevention policy in Wales?](#)

The experience of previous PhD students is summarised [here](#) and [here](#).

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 welcome applications for internships which examine the role of evidence in policymaking and/or the impact of knowledge mobilisation. This could be in a particular policy field of your PhD or more generally. Some further information on areas of focus and potential research questions are provided below.

Areas of focus and potential research questions

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 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](#) and [knowledge mobilisation](#) 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?
- Who are the actors involved in a policy-evidence community? Where does power lie?
- 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?
- How does the composition and function of evidence-policy communities in Wales compare with other countries?

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. You should focus on our [three key priority areas](#) of Tackling Inequalities, Environment and Net Zero, and Community Wellbeing and analyse our back-catalogue of reports to ensure that there is an appropriate fit, and contact Prof James Downe James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk at an early stage to discuss the scope and shape of any proposal before you submit it.

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.

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 is 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 work in the office for two days a week and we encourage the student to do likewise. For students registered on a part-time studentship, internships are also available on a part-time basis, and this will need to be negotiated with the Centre.

We are flexible on the start date of the internship as this will depend on individual circumstances.

Funding and costs

The successful applicant will get a paid extension of three months to their PhD at an indicative monthly rate of £2,149 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 university 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: info@wcpp.org.uk

Application process

We welcome applications from students on *all* pathways. If you are interested in an internship, you should first discuss this opportunity with your supervisor and get their approval. We also strongly

advise you to liaise with the Centre's Director of Research James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk to discuss your ideas for the project.

Please send a letter of application and a CV to info@wcpp.org.uk by **Friday 11th April 2025**. Each document should be no more than two sides of A4. Your letter should outline your ideas on the proposed methodological approach to the study and ideas on ways to disseminate the findings. You should also 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.

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