

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](http://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.

Examining university-based policy engagement bodies in the UK

Background

WCPP is a university-based knowledge broker focused on supporting evidence-based policy and practice in Welsh government and public services. Over the 12 years it has existed there has been a significant growth of other policy engagement institutes in universities across the UK. In previous research we have demonstrated that these centres show considerable diversity in terms of their origins, organisational models, and the knowledge mobilisation functions they perform (Durrant and MacKillop, 2022). However, we still know little about how they operate as place-based knowledge mobilisation initiatives in different geographical contexts. Many of these centres will see their key role as helping academics in their host institutions influence national policymaking in Westminster. Others however may emphasise more local engagement within their region or local authorities as part of the 'civic' mission of their university. The development of some of these university-based institutes may also be closely related to sub-national governance structures such as devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, or the introduction of mayoral combined authorities in some parts of England.

Methods

This project will aim to increase understanding of the strategic priorities of university-policy engagement bodies across the UK in terms of their intended engagement and impact with policy actors at different geographical scales. In particular, we are interested in whether their prioritisation of national or local actors is affected by factors including the type of host university (e.g. Pre-92 or Post-92), their geographical location (e.g. proximity to London), or local governance context (e.g. whether based in a part of the UK with a devolved government or combined authority).

The project will begin with desk-based research to compile an updated list of university-based policy engagement bodies in the UK. This will include information on the territorial governance of the part of the UK in which their university is based. From here, we will select a purposeful sample of these policy-engagement bodies to include in the primary research stage of the project. This will most likely consist of interviews with key actors from these bodies or their host institutions to gain an understanding of the spatial strategies of their institutes and the factors behind these priorities. If appropriate within the research design, survey methods could also be employed to reach a wider section of respondents. Members of the research team in WCPP have good relationships with people in many university-policy engagement centres through our participation in the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN). This means we will be able to help facilitate access to people to interview.

Outputs

Outputs will include a report summarising the research which will be published on the Centre's website. The findings will also be disseminated at events attended by other university-based policy engagement institutes and wider stakeholders. This will form a basis for future intended work

examining the impact on capacity for evidence-based policymaking and practice at UK, regional, and local levels.

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

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.

Please send a letter of application and a CV to info@wcpp.org.uk by **23:59 15th February 2026** please cc. esrc@bangor.ac.uk when submitting your application.

Each document should be no more than two sides of A4. Your letter should outline the focus of your internship – (*Examining university-based policy engagement bodies in the UK*) - your ideas on the 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.