

Placement opportunity for ESRC-funded students

The following information has been provided by the host organisation and outlines the opportunity available. Any queries about this placement should be addressed to the host organisation at the details provided below.

Name of host organisation:	UKRI Network Plus/Polarities; University of Birmingham UK
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Brief description of the host organisation:

The University of Birmingham is the lead on the UKRI Network Plus investment 'Shifting Global Polarities'. The initiative brings together more than 30 leading experts globally, within academic and policy circles, to address research gaps and needs during a period of significant societal, geopolitical, and environmental change across Eurasia. Key themes the network aims to address include social upheaval, geopolitics and security, environmental crisis, human rights, Russia-China relations and post-conflict reconstruction, aiming to create new syntheses, knowledge and networks, build new capacities, and train and mentor early career academics. This is a multi-institutional initiative partnering with the Universities of Glasgow, Manchester and Oxford, along the Institute of Development Studies, the Royal United Services Institute and international partners in the US, Ukraine, Finland and Japan. More details can be found on the [website](#).

Placement opportunity available

Summary of the project available to students to include:

- *the types of activity that they will engage with and the expected outputs/deliverables*
- *what support the student will receive during their placement*

A key aim of the Network is to provide syntheses of emerging intellectual trends and areas of focus with respect to the Europe-Asia region. This placement forms part of this broader initiative.

The main activity would be to produce a report evaluating recent and emerging intellectual trends in language-based area studies journals (and related publications/reports) focused on Europe-Asia. This would involve gathering relevant qualitative and/or quantitative evidence from sources such as academic journals, government output, Think Tank reports etc., and liaising with members of the Network to inform the analysis and validate findings. The final report would form a significant output for the Network and would be hosted on the Network website for wider dissemination.

The successful candidate would work in collaboration with Jon Oldfield (Birmingham), Elena Barabantseva (Manchester) and other Network members where appropriate – to

examine recent published output in core English-language journals in order determine recent trends and intellectual directions.

Approximate timetable:

Month 1 - literature search; discussions with Network team members;

Month 2 – assessment and evaluation of the literature;

Month 3 – finalising the report.

The placement will provide experience of conducting a literature review and transferable skills linked to working with the Network and its partners.

The individual would also be expected to work collaboratively with other Network members. Successful applicants would be embedded with Network team members at Birmingham and Manchester and receive guidance and feedback on the task.

Skills and experience required for the role

Core requirements:

Analytical skills;

Ability to write clearly, succinctly and with precision;

Ability to work across disciplinary areas (social sciences, arts & humanities)

Desirable:

Familiarity with key socio-cultural and/or geopolitical trends characterising the Europe-Asia region;

Experience of producing scholarly literature reviews.

Working arrangements and location of the placement

The opportunity is open to current ESRC-funded students, and will last three months full-time, or up to six months if the successful candidate would prefer to work part-time.

Work can be carried out remotely (the candidate would need to provide their own laptop) – with regular virtual meetings and scope for in-person meetings at the University of Birmingham. Reasonable travel and subsistence costs would be covered by the Network. There is also scope to work on campus in Birmingham in shared office space.

How to apply

Closing date: 30 April 2026

Application format: Please submit a CV (2 sides max.), cover letter (1 side indicating how your experience fits the remit of the placement opportunity), and a completed ESRC placement and funding permissions form.

Applications should be submitted to: Jon Oldfield – j.d.oldfield@bham.ac.uk

Anticipated start date: June 2026

Recruitment process

The host organisation is responsible for processing the applications received for this opportunity and applications will be processed as follows:

Applications will be assessed by the Network Plus team to determine fit with the task as outlined.

The most suitable candidate will be invited for a short, informal chat (online) to serve as an opportunity for both parties to check understanding and discuss the objectives for the placement.

Host contact details

Any queries about this opportunity should be addressed to the host organisation.

Please direct queries to **Jon Oldfield, j.d.oldfield@bham.ac.uk**