

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.

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| Name of host organisation: | UKRI Network Plus/Polarities; University of Birmingham |
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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

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 the production of a policy-focused report examining a thematic area of significance for the UK within the context of the Europe-Asia region. Potential foci include: cyber security, migration, digital technology, health services etc. The final report would form a significant output for the Network and it would be hosted on the Network website for wider dissemination.

The research student would be expected to work in collaboration with Jon Oldfield (Birmingham), Lewis Husain (IDS), Elena Barabantseva (Manchester) and other Network members where appropriate in order to determine a suitable focus and develop the report. This process will be further supported through interviews with Network members and other key individuals.

Approximate timetable:

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

Month 2 - assessment and evaluation of the literature/ carrying out of interviews;
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 be expected to work collaboratively with other Network members. Successful applicants would be embedded with the Network team located 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 social and geopolitical trends characterising the Europe-Asia region;

Experience of producing policy-facing literature reviews;

Experience in conducting qualitative research interviews.

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.

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**