

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:	UCL Institute for Global Prosperity
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Brief description of the host organisation:

The Institute for Global Prosperity is an interdisciplinary research institute at UCL. It develops new frameworks for measuring and advancing prosperity beyond GDP. IGP leads three prosperity measurement programmes: the Citizen Prosperity Index (CPI), the Maisha Bora Index (Kenya), and the Good Life Euston Index (Camden). The CPI is derived from the East London Longitudinal Study (2021 to 2031), a decade-long research programme tracking prosperity across east London through repeated household surveys of approximately 4,000 residents, covering Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney, and Barking and Dagenham. IGP coordinates the BENEFITS Horizon Europe project, a seven-country, €3 million research programme on beyond-GDP indicators. The Data and AI for Social Purpose research theme drives methodological innovation in composite index construction, small-area estimation, and applied social data science.

Placement opportunity available

Project title: Livelihood Security, Productivity, and the Beyond-GDP Policy Agenda

IGP's Productivity Research Programme examines a central question: does livelihood insecurity constrain productivity, and if so, through what mechanisms? Early findings suggest that financial insecurity, poor health, housing costs, and care responsibilities suppress both individual earnings and regional output. These results challenge conventional supply-side explanations of the UK productivity puzzle and carry direct implications for the international beyond-GDP policy agenda.

This placement offers the opportunity to develop original research within this programme. Three research themes are open for investigation, and the student will focus on one or two depending on their interests and expertise.

The first theme explores the relationship between livelihood insecurity and productivity across different populations, geographies, or time periods. Questions include whether the relationship holds across different labour markets, how it varies by gender or region, and whether policy interventions such as welfare reform alter the trajectory.

The second theme investigates the mechanisms linking insecurity to reduced economic participation and output. This includes the role of financial stress on cognitive bandwidth, the interaction between housing costs and labour supply, and the compounding effects of care responsibilities on earnings.

The third theme connects these findings to the broader beyond-GDP measurement and policy agenda, asking how conventional productivity metrics fail to capture the costs of insecurity and what alternative frameworks can inform policy at national and international level.

The student will have access to a range of data sources and will be expected to identify and work with the datasets best suited to their research questions. Expected outputs are one to two research papers (academic or policy-facing) with the student credited as co-author.

The student will be supervised by Dr Nikolaos Tzivanakis and embedded within the Data and AI for Social Purpose research team. Regular supervision meetings will be held throughout, with access to IGP's data infrastructure and research network.

Skills and experience required for the role

Essential: strong quantitative methods training, experience with survey or panel data, proficiency in R, Python, or Stata.

Desirable: familiarity with labour economics or the economics of wellbeing, experience with causal inference or policy evaluation methods, knowledge of beyond-GDP measurement frameworks, and interest in the relationship between economic policy and living standards.

Working arrangements and location of the placement

The placement will be conducted fully remotely. The student is not required to attend UCL in person, though this can be arranged if preferred. Flexible working arrangements can be discussed at the point of offer. Reasonable travel and subsistence costs will be reimbursed.

How to apply

Applicants should submit a CV and a cover letter (no more than two pages) outlining their relevant skills and motivation. Applicants will also need to submit a Placement Funding Permission Form with their application. Applications should be sent to n.tzivanakis@ucl.ac.uk with the subject line "ESRC RiP Application: Productivity Placement."

Closing date: 30/04/2026

Anticipated start date: 01 June 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter. We are flexible on start date.

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 reviewed by the host. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an informal online conversation to discuss the project and their experience. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within two weeks of the closing date.

Host contact details

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

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