

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:	Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR)
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Brief description of the host organisation:

The [Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\)](#) is the UK's independent regulator of official statistics. OSR works to ensure that statistics serve the public good by promoting statistics that are trustworthy, of high quality and of public value. We work closely with statistics producers, users and stakeholders across government and the wider data landscape to support improvement, transparency and public confidence in statistics.

Placement opportunity available

This ESRC-funded placement will support [OSR's systemic review of UK water statistics](#), a high-profile programme of regulatory work examining how statistics and data on water quality, pollution and usage are produced, used and compared across the four UK nations.

The placement is designed to provide the student with substantial professional development, applied research experience, and policy-relevant impact, while contributing directly to OSR's regulatory objectives.

Activities and experience

During the placement, the student will:

- Conduct a qualitative, structured, desk-based review of UK water statistics and data, covering: water quality, pollution, resources, usage, abstraction and leakage, to identify the key UK water statistics and data producers, data flows, and the available statistics and data publications
- Analyse the key differences associated with different UK water monitoring regimes, including their coverage, methods, quality and the publication practices across the UK, with a focus on quality, comparability and identifying evidence gaps
- Research the relevant water policy, operational and regulatory context in each UK nation to identify key user needs and policy themes of relevance to the water statistics and data landscape
- Apply the comparability framework referenced OSR's recent work on [the adequacy of comparable UK data](#) to a selection key UK water statistics and data on common topics nations to highlight the extent of comparability between them
- Engage with some key stakeholders including UK water statistics producers, gaining exposure to regulatory and policy processes
- Translate complex technical material into a clear report for non-academic audiences and an accessible visual summary of the UK's water statistics landscape

Expected outputs

Outputs will be proportionate to the length of the placement and are expected to include:

- A structured overview report covering the UK water statistics and data landscape including the water policy, operational and regulatory context in each UK nation
- A comparability assessment on a selection of key UK data sources relating to water quality, pollution and usage drawing on OSR's comparability framework
- An accessible visual summary of the UK water data landscape to highlight coverage, comparability, gaps and limitations, to support OSR's further engagement with statistics users, as part of the broader systemic review
- Contributions to the internal evidence base that will support OSR's systemic review and further stakeholder engagement
- It is expected that the above outputs will be published so should be of a publishable standard

Support and supervision

The student will receive:

- A named OSR supervisor with relevant subject and regulatory expertise
- Regular supervision and feedback throughout the placement
- Access to internal material and opportunities to engage with OSR staff and external producer stakeholders
- Support to ensure the placement complements and strengthens the student's doctoral research and ESRC training objectives
- Opportunity to attend weekly OSR team cascade meetings and training sessions

Skills and experience required for the role

Essential:

- Current ESRC-funded PhD student
- Strong analytical and research skills
- Ability to synthesise and communicate complex information clearly for non-academic audiences

Desirable:

- Background or interest in statistics, data science, environmental policy, geography, economics or related disciplines
- Experience working with administrative data, official statistics and policy-relevant evidence
- Interest in research impact, knowledge exchange or regulatory decision-making

Working arrangements and location of the placement

- The placement will be hosted by OSR with hybrid working arrangements available
- Location and working pattern will be agreed to support accessibility, inclusion and effective supervision

- This is expected to be a 3-month, full-time placement, though the duration and intensity will be agreed in line with ESRC placement guidance and the student's doctoral commitments

How to apply

Applications should include:

- A short CV (max 2 pages)
- A short cover letter (max 500 words) explaining the applicant's interest in the placement, their relevant skills and experience for the required activities and outputs, and how the placement will support their doctoral development
- Confirmation of ESRC funding eligibility, including completion of the ESRC placement funding permission form

Closing date: **12 June**

How to apply: Applications should be emailed to oliver.fox-tatum@statistics.gov.uk

Anticipated start date: Summer 2026

Recruitment process

Applications will be reviewed by OSR staff involved in the systemic review. Shortlisted candidates may be invited to an interview or informal discussion focusing on skills, interests and alignment with ESRC placement objectives.

Security restrictions (if relevant)

The successful candidate will be required to comply with OSR's security and confidentiality requirements. Any checks will be discussed in advance and kept proportionate to the role.

Host contact details

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

Oliver Fox-Tatum
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