Postgraduate Researcher Experience Scheme (PREP) – Guidance for Applicants

Are you a postgraduate researcher? Would you like to add to your work experience alongside your PhD? Do you need to develop skills, build networks or improve your understanding of the career opportunities open to you? Are you looking to make informed career choices and improve your chances of being offered your next position or implement your own business idea? Could you benefit from a financial award to cover expenses, unpaid experience or costs to allow you to do this?

The Postgraduate Researcher Experience Programme (PREP) has been established to enable researchers to add to their experience. It encourages you to get the experience, information, training, advice or insights you need. It does this by providing an award of between £100 and £1000 that can be used to pay for travel, accommodation, training fees or to provide a small salary to cover your time. It is your responsibility to set up the experience or create the opportunity but if you can do that, the scheme can cover some or all of the costs. The scheme aims to fund opportunities that add to your experience as a PhD student and therefore will not fund work or training that is integral to your PhD research. In particular, we are looking for opportunities that develop your links, knowledge and networks with organisations and individuals beyond academic institutions and show reciprocal benefits.

Early applications are encouraged as funding is limited and will be considered on a first come – first served basis. The scheme may advertise a closing date in each cycle of funding but awards will be allocated as they are received so any advertised closing date could be brought forward.

PREP bursary recipients must be registered students at the time of their application and during the activity. It is therefore not possible to fund activities which will be undertaken during an official Leave of Absence.

Researchers who receive an award will be expected to complete reflective activities following their experience. All recipients will complete a 500-1000 word reflective learning log. In addition, those receiving an award of £500 or more will also create a resource based on their reflection to highlight the benefits of the scheme to other researchers. This could be in the form of a case-study, blog-post, 3 minute video, poster or presentation.

Why add to your experience?

Work experience can offer a range of benefits and take a variety of forms. It provides learning, insights and increased awareness in ways that suit you, your needs and your availability. At any stage of your research whether you are enhancing your career, looking to develop yourself or exploring self-employment you could benefit. Consider this list of possible gains;

- Build professional experience and exposure
- Develop specific ‘commercial awareness’ or sector knowledge
- Enhance your self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem
- Experience fresh perspectives
- Apply your skills in a different setting and learn new ones
- Expose your research to a wider audience
- Meet new people and develop professional networks
- Learn about your preferences and the options and opportunities available to you
- Understand your value in a different environment
- Demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment to working in a particular role or field
What do we mean by work experience?

We encourage you to be creative and open minded about what this experience could include. The fund could enable you to undertake:

- A period of work experience alongside your PhD
- Industry visits to discuss career paths, develop collaborations or build networks
- A voluntary role on a regular basis or as a one off activity
- Market research to determine the viability of a business idea
- Professional skills training and development activities
- Consultancy or project work
- Work shadowing, perhaps spending a day or two in a different work environment
- Visit days or site tours advertised by employers or arranged yourself
- Information interviews – one to one discussions or meetings with someone doing a role or working for an organisation that interests you
- The organisation of a community event or activity
- Public engagement activities
- An internship or placement

What costs can the fund cover?

An award of between £100 and £1000 can be used to pay for travel, accommodation, training fees or to provide a small salary to cover your time or the resources you may need.

What is not covered by the fund?

Unfortunately we are not able to award funding to support the costs associated with attending or presenting at an academic conference related to your research or for undertaking work or training that is integral to your PhD.

Can I get support and advice on finding an opportunity?

We have careers consultants who specialise in working with researchers. They offer individual careers consultations so that you can discuss any aspect of your career development whether you are exploring career ideas, looking at ways to enhance your skills and experience, making decisions, developing a career strategy or applying for jobs and opportunities. You can book appointments via Career Connect in MUSE.

Can I apply again if I have applied before?

If you have already received a PREP bursary you can apply again as long as your application is received in a subsequent academic year. Preference may be given to those who have not received PREP funding before. If you have applied previously but not been successful, you are welcome to apply again.

How can I apply?

Please complete the Application form at https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/prep

This is a competitive process so you are encouraged to carefully consider how you answer each question and give comprehensive answers.

How will a decision be made on whether I am successful?

Awards will be made based against the business case, benefits and rationale given in the PREP Application Form. All applications will be reviewed by a panel and a decision communicated by email. We aim to respond to your application within four working weeks of receiving your application form.
Is there a closing date?

A closing date may be advertised at the start of a funding cycle. Early applications are recommended as funding is limited and applications will be considered on a first come – first served basis. The scheme may close earlier than any date advertised if all funds have been allocated.

What happens after I receive an award?

You will need to provide evidence of your planned activity and complete a number of documents before funds are released to you. Researchers who receive an award will be expected to complete reflective activities following their experience. This should be submitted within 4 weeks of completing the experience.

All PGRs who receive an award will complete a 500-1000 word reflective learning log. In addition, PGRs who receive an award of £500 or more are asked to create a resource based on their reflection to highlight the benefits of the scheme to other researchers. This could be in the form of a case-study, blog-post, 3 minute video, poster or presentation.

Researchers must submit all documentation requested by the PREP team to enable payment to be authorised. There is a final deadline of the 30th June to enable financial transactions to be finalised before the end of the financial year.