



NC3Rs Studentship Scheme: Notes and FAQs

1. Competition overview

The aim of the NC3Rs studentship scheme is to embed the 3Rs in the training of early career scientists from a broad range of research backgrounds. The NC3Rs invites applications that will attract and inspire the UK's top graduates, and provide excellent scientific training as well as a solid introduction to the 3Rs.

Applications are invited from UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Research Council Institutes and Independent Research Organisations (IROs, as described on the UK Research and Innovation [website](#)). The Research Organisation (RO, defined as a UK HEI, IRO or RC Institute) will be responsible for finding students and the administration of each studentship during the award.

Key considerations of the scheme include:

- The same or similar application cannot be considered by any Research Council, the Health Departments or any other research funder at the same time.
- Applications are welcomed from leading UK researchers with **a minimum of five year's postdoctoral experience**.
- A minimum of two Supervisors should be included on an application.
- Industrial organisations may partner or collaborate on applications but are not eligible to be primary applicants. Overseas organisations may only be included as collaborators.
- The proposals must be of excellent scientific quality with a measurable impact on the 3Rs.
- A proposal may integrate two disciplines or departments. In doing so ROs should ensure that the training content remains coherent across its breadth and remains focused on delivering a specific set of research skills.
- Awards are made as cash limited Studentships of £100k in total over three years or £135k in total over four years that are paid directly to the RO over the course of the award.
- A studentship can be activated as soon as an award letter has been issued. All awards must start by 1 October of the following year at the latest.
- The NC3Rs does not provide funding to students directly.

2. Stipend

Please note that NC3Rs Studentships are administered by the host institution; this means the institution is responsible for deciding the financial details of each award.

Studentship stipends are set by the host institution; however, a minimum stipend for all Studentships must be met. Minimum amounts for studentship stipends and allowances are based on UK Research and Innovation rates and can be found on the [MRC-UKRI website](#).

Examples of the flexibility that a Research Organisation can employ are:

- Increasing the student stipend above the NC3Rs set minimum;
- Spending according to project need on research consumables, travel etc.;

- Providing support for professional development courses for the student etc.

3. Disabled Students Allowance

If a student incurs additional expenditure in connection with their postgraduate training as a result of disability, mental health problems or specific learning difficulties, they may be eligible for a Disabled Students Allowance.

To find out how to apply for Disabled Students Allowance, please contact the university's disability officer or access centre. Additional information is available on the [UKRI website](#).

4. Student eligibility

The NC3Rs does not provide funding to students directly. If you are a student looking for funding for a Studentship please contact the relevant Research Organisation.

Please do not contact the NC3Rs directly to enquire about student eligibility; it is the responsibility of the university's registrar office to contact NC3Rs if advice on eligibility is required.

5. Academic qualifications

Candidates for Studentships must hold qualifications at the level of, or equivalent to, at least an Upper Second Class honours degree from a UK academic institution, in a subject relevant to NC3Rs' scientific remit. Qualifications, or a combination of qualifications and experience, which demonstrate equivalent ability and attainment would also be considered.

6. Writing up and submission

The expected duration of the PhD project and funding should be agreed with the student at the outset. The NC3Rs expects thesis submission no later than six months from the funding end date.

7. Student eligibility

Student eligibility criteria are detailed in the UKRI [training grant conditions](#) and [training grant guide](#).

Further information can be found in [Annex B](#) of the training grant guide, 'International Eligibility criteria for UKRI funded studentships'.

NC3Rs Studentship Scheme - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How does the NC3Rs expect the organisation to allocate funds?

A: Students receiving a stipend must be paid at least the UKRI minimum recommended amount (see section 2 above). Following this, the Research Organisation can then allocate the rest of the funds according to the requirements of the project.

Examples of the flexibility that a Research Organisation can employ are:

- Increasing the student stipend above the UKRI-set minimum;
- Spending according to project need on research consumables, travel etc.;

Q: Who is responsible for the confirmation of awards to students?

A: The Research Organisation is responsible for the selection and confirmation of awards to students, according to NC3Rs-set stipulations regarding eligibility and minimum stipend levels.

Q: What can the Studentship be used to fund?

A: The funding may be used to cover student stipends, fees, project costs and the incidental costs of research training, such as travel and conference attendance. The amounts for each of these headings are decided upon by the individual Research Organisation and not by the NC3Rs.

Where a student is eligible for a stipend, the stipend awarded must be at least equal to the minimum rates for the relevant academic year. The Research Organisation may, if it wishes, pay a higher level of stipend, provided that it does not overspend on the value of the grant.

The allocation of funds for the incidental costs of research training should have regard for the nature and complexity of projects and the need for fieldwork, conferences, broadening training and industrial placements. Individual organisations determine their own policy on how these funds are allocated to students.

Q: Can we use an element of the award to cover additional administrative costs incurred in managing the students?

A: No. "Topslicing" to make provision for the additional costs which may be incurred in staff time administering the awards is not a permitted use of NC3Rs funding.

Q: Who decides on the eligibility of students to receive a stipend?

A: The RCs are not involved in the recruitment and selection of students for studentships. It is the responsibility of the RO to ensure a selected student meets the relevant residency, academic, subject and scheme eligibility criteria. The RO should not offer a studentship to a prospective student unless they are certain that they meet all the relevant eligibility criteria. ROs should be able to provide evidence to support this decision if required by the awarding RC. Recruitment processes must be fair, open and transparent. When necessary, further guidance may be sought from the NC3Rs.

Q: Can we fund a student who wants to start before the next full academic year commences?

A: Yes. The NC3Rs policy allows students to start as soon as the award is finalised. The award can be activated any time after the award letter is sent. However, the student must be in place by the start of the next academic year (1 October) at the latest.

Q: Can part-time students be supported

A: Part-time Studentships for those who wish to combine their research training with work or domestic responsibilities are acceptable by the NC3Rs. For part-time Studentships, it is expected that the period of study will reflect the percentage of time spent pursuing doctoral studies, and a minimum of 50% of full-time effort is required (with an expected maximum period of study of up to six years).

Students should be made aware that funding for part-time study is an option. For part time Studentships the award will be paid to the Research Organisation as for a standard Studentship, quarterly in arrears, for the duration of a three-year term. It is the responsibility of the Research Organisation to manage these funds over the extended period of a part-time Studentship.

Q: How much do we have to pay students?

A: Students receiving a stipend must be paid at least the minimum UKRI recommended amount. Maximum stipend levels, should you wish to pay more, must be agreed with your local tax office. It is not permissible to award a fees only Studentship to a student who is eligible to receive a stipend.

Q: How can students claim Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA)?

A: Information on claiming Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

Q: Can we replace students who leave early?

A: Yes, if you have sufficient funds to support a replacement award. The Research Organisation must make suitable arrangements for coping with absences of students for illness, maternity, paternity and holidays. The Research Organisation must ensure that it is aware of unauthorised absences by students, so that future payments may be stopped and (where necessary) those already made in advance can be recovered. The period of a student's support may be extended at the Research Organisation's discretion and (with NC3Rs approval) to offset a period of genuine absence, subject to finding the necessary funding from within the Research Organisation.

For more detailed queries please contact the NC3Rs at: Studentships@nc3rs.org.uk