

**Widening access to postgraduate study:  
where to start?**  
**A practical workshop on research internships**

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# Welcome

Aims for today's session:

- Introduction to Oxford and Cambridge's research internship programmes
- Sharing the theory of change that underpins the programmes
- Thinking creatively to address issues in your own institution

# Research internships

- Paid placements for those interested in postgraduate study (undergraduates or graduates)
  - Research placement with support from a supervisor/ mentor
  - College accommodation
  - Skills development programme
  - Social activities

By offering these programmes, Oxford and Cambridge are aiming to address:

- The disproportionately low proportion of postgraduate students who have previously studied at non-research intensive institutions
- The barriers to obtaining research experience
- The underrepresentation of certain racially minoritized groups within academia
- An image of inaccessibility and lack of transparency that may discourage applicants

# Cambridge: Summer Research Internship programmes

The six main programmes covering all six of our schools

- [Experience Postgrad: Life Sciences](#)
- [Social Sciences and Humanities Access to Research Experience \(SHARE\)](#)
- [Aspiring Researchers: Arts and Humanities](#)
- [STEM summer research internships](#)
- [Leverhulme Centre for Life in the Universe summer internship](#)
- [Google DeepMind Research Ready programme](#)

A total of 655 applications for Summer 2024, for 59 places

STEM: 424

Humanities: 231



# Cambridge: Summer Research Internship programmes

## Centralised elements

- Eligibility criteria
- IAG sessions whenever possible
- Social programme
- Coordinator working group

## Programmes' responsibilities

- Selection/offer making
- Programme structure
- Subject-specific training/sessions
- Student mentors
- All day-to-day running of the programme
- Accommodation (College partner)
- Social activities
- Evaluation

## Oxford: UNIQ+ research internship programme

- Residential research internship programme for current / recent undergraduates from under-represented and / or disadvantaged backgrounds
- Seven weeks in July / August
- Interns undertake a research project, working with a supervisor, and conclude with a presentation to their peers
- Accompanying programme of skills training (research skills, careers, how to apply etc.) and social activities



## Oxford: UNIQ+ research internship programme (cont.)

UNIQ+ PG applications to Oxford 2019-2023 compared to overall applications

UNIQ+ participants	UNIQ+ apps to Oxford	UNIQ+ offers	UNIQ+ accepts	UNIQ+ offer rate	Overall Oxford offer rate	UNIQ+ registration	Overall registration
635	343	130	53	37.18%	27.58%	50.86%	62.12%

## Oxford: UNIQ+ research internship programme (cont.)

- Budget to increase from 2026
- Initial plan is to deliver internships by subject area, with separate strands for humanities / social sciences / STEM
- Separate to this, separate strand for other audiences (those with caring responsibilities / in employment / otherwise unable to take part in a residential programme)
- Likely to include mentoring / online IAG sessions





What are the barriers in your  
institution for prospective  
postgraduate students?

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**Situation:**

Oxford has collected contextual data on postgraduate applicants, showing groups that are under-represented. The University therefore wishes to run a summer internship programme to provide experience of PG research for these groups.

**Aims:**

To design a research internship programme to widen participation in postgraduate research.

**Inputs:**

- Accommodation in colleges
- Academics to supervise
- Funding to pay student stipends
- Staff to deliver programme

**Activities:**

- Marketing
- Application and assessment
- Seven-week research project
- Social events
- IAG events

**Outputs:**

- Interns present on research at end-of-programme conference
- Intern report on internship experience

**Outcomes:**

- Majority of participants progress to postgraduate study at research-intensive institution
- Increased number of WP students applying to postgraduate study at Oxford

**Impact:**

- University able to attract more donor funding for postgraduate outreach work
- UNIQ+ acts as blueprint for other universities' research internships

**Assumptions:**

- Sufficient college rooms available
- Sufficient academics willing to supervise
- Sufficient interns will apply
- No welfare support required for students who are only here for a short time

**Unintended consequences:**

- Some interns get publications
- Some interns invited by supervisors to return for further research.



## Over to you

- 20 minutes to produce your own Theory of Change
- 1. Come up with a key issue you want to address ('situation'), and the change you want to achieve.
- 2. Work your way through how you would achieve this change, step by step.
- Nuala, Ingrid, Terry and Felicity will 'chair' each group, and feed back to the room on your behalf at the end.

# Thank you! Keep in touch:

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