

## SHARE Research Experience Programme

### University of Cambridge School of the Humanities and Social Sciences and the University of Cambridge ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP)

#### Q&A from the Webinar on 17 March 2022

Panellists from the School of the Humanities and Social Sciences:

Claire Prendergast, Postgraduate Recruitment Manager

Isobel Humphrey, Assistant Secretary of the School

#### When will summer school take place?

Precise timing is still being settled but we hope to run this over July and August.

#### How many applicants will be taken on?

There are 8 places available.

#### Who would this benefit? Would it be every degree? Or do you have to do a specific degree?

The programme is specifically for the humanities and social sciences. It covers a wide range of subjects - have a quick look at our website. You may be on a different subject now in your undergraduate degree but thinking about changing and that's fine.

If you're interested in a particular subject at postgraduate study, it doesn't necessarily have to match your undergraduate degree. Obviously, a lot will depend on your suitability for the projects that we have on offer.

#### Are we required to live on campus for the entire duration of the course, including weekends?

We need you to be here in the week, but your weekends are your own. Obviously, Cambridge is a great place to be at weekends, but we don't lock the doors on Friday night!

#### What does the schedule look like, such as how many hours per day?

Part time options are available, but essentially it is all your time, so normal working hours and then your evenings free.

#### How many people apply to SHARE?

Our first year didn't have the project element in it and we had about 30 applications for about 10 places. Opportunities at Cambridge receive a lot of applications but obviously it depends on the project you're interested in. If you're interested and there's a project that you like the look of, we would encourage you to apply.

### Can I apply for a project that's not my major?

We are very keen to attract anybody who's thinking of doing a postgraduate degree in the humanities and social sciences. Some of the projects are more transferable than others. Have a good look at the projects and what it says you'd be expected to do. If you think you can do it even though it's not your current undergraduate major but it's something you would like to learn, or you have been involved in a blog or something extracurricular that demonstrates an interest in that area to any future supervisor, you should put this in your application.

There will be training provided for all of the projects, but you should try to make a case for why you have the right sort of skills that would help you to manage on that project.

### Can a social science student apply to all of these research opportunities or are there some of them such as language research for example which are only open to foreign language students?

They are open to all. You apply to the scheme, not to the individual project. You can select up to three projects that you think you might be particularly interested in. If you are accepted for a place on the scheme, we will do our best to match you with the projects that you said you most prefer. Some of the projects have indicated what kind of background they would expect students to have in order to be able to engage with that research project.

### What do we look for in a CV and what information should the candidate highlight about themselves?

We are looking for somebody who demonstrates academic potential for postgraduate study. If you are interested in going on to postgraduate research, i.e., a master's and then a PhD (usually in our subjects), you need to show us that you have the potential to do that. Whether that's at Cambridge or somewhere else.

The scheme is about giving you the skills, confidence, and knowledge that you need to make a good application for a postgraduate place. The main thing you need to show us is that you are on track and have the potential to work at the highest levels of academic excellence. Beyond that, please look at the eligibility criteria that we have set out on the website.

We do ask for references, and your referees will be asked to essentially confirm that you have the potential to achieve at that level. Beyond that, we're looking for enthusiasm and people who interested in the projects, are looking for a career in postgraduate research as their next step and want to learn how to make that happen for them.

The kind of CV that we might be looking for will be different from what you would provide if you were applying for a job with an employer. Think about what you include in your CV and make it relevant to the thing that you are applying for. It will give us a good idea of what you are like as a candidate and your suitability for these projects.

Where would we stay in regard to accommodation? Because there are various different places to stay.

You will stay in one of the colleges in Cambridge as a group. You will have good access to the places where you are doing your research projects. You will get a feel for what it's like to be in a college because the college experience is a big part of postgraduate study at Cambridge. If you are accepted for the programme, everything will be arranged for you. We will talk to each person individually in detail about what they need and what will work for them.

I have seen on the website that it is required to have been in England since 2019. Since you are mostly directing this project to 2nd and 3rd years student, why is it restricted to 2019 and not open to students which started in 2020?

We are partly funded by ESRC, which is part of the UK Research Council network. UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) have specific criteria that we are obliged to follow, and the requirements are around the fact that people must have been ordinary resident and in the UK (but not mainly for full-time education) since 1 July 2019.

Would participating in this scheme help us if we were to apply for postgraduate studies at Cambridge?

It will help you apply for postgraduate study anywhere. If you are accepted onto the programme, having done the programme, we hope you will be in a good position to apply to Cambridge and will want to apply to Cambridge, but equally it will stand you in good stead wherever you apply. This scheme is designed to help you be in a strong position to put forward a really good application.

What is the application process like?

There is a form to fill in, a CV, a reference and transcript to get - the website indicates what is required. There is no interview process and no test. If you are accepted onto the programme, we would talk to you about start dates, accommodation, and any concerns that you have. For those that are accepted there will be a small amount of prior reading and some preparation.

The SHARE team are available to answer any questions that you have. You can email us any query you have, and we will do our best to help you. ([share@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:share@admin.cam.ac.uk))

From the feedback from previous students that took part last year, what did they enjoy or benefit from the most?

All of them said how helpful it was to have a student mentor during the programme. We have therefore built that into the programme again this year. And the students who came last year found it very helpful to have academic mentors as well.

The other thing that was very beneficial was all the information that was given on how to apply for postgraduate research, how to make sure you make a good application and how to apply for funding.

Last year's students loved the opportunity to meet and engage with current students who are at Cambridge doing research and see that they weren't all that different from them.

## Would this benefit those who are doing a law degree but not looking to do postgraduate research?

SHARE is focused on a postgraduate research career. You don't have to be absolutely set on it, but if you're thinking if it's right for you, even if you are not sure, this is a good programme to apply to, because if you get a place, you will come out of the programme knowing whether it's right for you firstly and knowing a lot more about how to do it if you decide it's right for you, and understanding more about the process and what it takes.

If you are really not thinking about going on to postgraduate study, there are other sorts of internship schemes that help students get into work and prepare for work, starting a career in a particular subject area.

If you're a bit of both and you think, well, I could go and start a career, or I might carry on to postgraduate research, then SHARE could benefit you, you'll know by the end of the programme which of those is more appealing to you.

Talk to your careers service and talk to your current supervisors and get some sense about what the route for you is. They can advise about postgraduate study as well as applying for jobs. They may well have advisors who can help you look at things like the CV writing, about how you tailor it more towards applying for postgraduate study and research rather than applying for a job at a company.

## In the sociology programme it says there will be some qualitative research methods and coding things. So, are we required to have prior skills about that?

The plan is to do some training for applicants once they're on the research projects, but there is a certain degree of prior knowledge which would be expected by some of the supervisors coming into the programmes as well. So, as we said, I think that's something we will probably need to pick up individually with that project supervisor.

If you have any questions generally about the projects first you should try to join that webinar when it happens, but equally, if you want to just drop an email to the SHARE inbox and say you're interested in a particular project, and do you have to have XZYX, then we can get that answer for you directly. Try and come to the webinar as you'll probably find everyone has the same questions and it will be a quicker way to get the answer. If you can't come to the webinar or want to know beforehand, just drop an email to the SHARE inbox and we'll try and resolve that for you.

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We would emphasise to everybody we can't take late applications. We have got a tight schedule once the applications are in to process them and let you know if you've been accepted. If you don't hit that 9:00am deadline we really can't take a late application.

We will be waiting to get references from your referee after that time, and we will be following up on those with the referees. It would be a good idea that whoever you're planning to ask for a reference is aware that the request will be coming to them, so they're primed for it, and they know what the timelines are for it.

We would like a referee who is able to comment on your background and your suitability for the project - the more that they are able to write about you, the better. Select someone who is able to

comment upon your ability to undertake that particular project and what you have already been able to contribute during your time at university.

Hopefully, you can find someone who is able to write well about you and able to give us a rounded picture because that's what we're looking for. We're trying to get to know you as well as possible through your application and it's really helpful to have an external perspective on you as well in terms of what you're doing. So do select your referee a little bit carefully in terms of who is able to comment on you and give them time to be able to write the best possible reference for you.

We're also aware of the fact that last year many of you will have had disruption in terms of teaching and learning because of the pandemic. There are some questions which ask about any interruptions that may have happened due to illness and things like that. Do please provide that information as well and give us some background, so we can take that into account because we're very aware of the fact that students have been impacted in the past couple of years.

Students we have with us at the moment were impacted in their undergraduate studies and obviously that's just continued as the pandemic has gone on. So be very upfront about that. We're not asking for a particular level of academic performance, at this stage. We're asking you to demonstrate potential, if you're on track to hit the high standards. If you know your last test didn't go so well, that doesn't matter so much. We want people who have got the potential to start a postgraduate study career in a top university. That's what we're looking for.

We're really excited about this programme. It is bigger and broader than last year's programme and because last year went so well, we wanted to do more. We think we've got a really nice set of projects here.

We really hope you will apply, if you have any questions at all, please just get in touch via email.

I know that we've had a few enquiries already from people who aren't in their second year, are in their final year of undergraduate or doing a postgraduate and have asked if they can apply to this programme.

This year, for this particular programme, the eligibility criteria is for students who are in their penultimate year of their study.

So, if you're doing a three-year degree, you must be in year two at the moment, or a four-year degree in your year three. We can't accept those who are in their final year this year or who are doing postgraduate study.

However, Cambridge is working in a consortium with UCL and City University in a scheme called In2Research. So, if you go online and type In2Research you should find it. It is aimed at also getting students to think about going on to a PhD and a research career. This year it's only for STEM students, but from next academic year, we'd be looking at taking students into social sciences and humanities and arts areas as well and Cambridge is part of that consortium of universities delivering that.

For that programme, I believe that it is not just for students who are in their year two, or three, of a four-year degree who are eligible. It would take students who are in their final year or who are doing postgraduate course as well. So, for those of you in those situations, you may think about that. Quite a number of other universities are also offering internship programmes, have a look around and see what there is. They all have different acceptability and eligibility criteria, so it's worthwhile having a look at both. The Research Council funded places are particularly for students who are in their

penultimate year, so we have to keep to that eligibility criteria, but there may be other options out there for you, so do have a look around and it may well be that even if it's not this year, maybe next year.

If you have any questions that we haven't answered, please do email us. We'd be happy to answer and to help you.

And good luck with your applications and hopefully we'll see you in a few months' time.