

## IFS PhD Studentships 2026-27

### **Summary**

IFS has been allocated a number of associated studentship awards via our ESRC Institute for the Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy. Students must be studying or have a place to study on a pathway that is eligible for ESRC funding, based at a university within the UBEL Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP).

Students work for their PhD at their university in conjunction with their supervisor, but are partially based at the IFS, sitting with a research team whose work programme has synergies with the student's area of interest. The aim of the scheme is to enhance the work of doctoral students by providing collaboration and learning opportunities in a vibrant and highly respected research institute, and to enhance our research community and networks with the inclusion of outstanding students.

It is our goal to build capacity in the social sciences in the UK more widely, and support and promote research that has a positive impact on society.

This document provides guidance for applicants and details of how to apply.

### **About the Studentships**

The Studentships are intended to give students the opportunity to broaden their research by accessing the opportunities available at the ESRC Institute at IFS. Students have the chance to attend a range of internal seminars and other events, work with IFS researchers and receive support from the senior academics based at IFS. They will have the chance to develop networks with academics and develop their understanding of the interaction between research and policy, which will stand them in good stead for their future careers.

In addition to taking formal courses and carrying out doctoral research at their host university, the scholar will be integrated into the daily life of the ESRC Institute. The student's research project will be managed as a sub-project of the Institute's set of research projects. At least one senior researcher at the ESRC Institute will be assigned to mentor the student and provide additional supervision to their PhD work, to complement the supervision they receive at their host DTP.

Students are expected to work for part of their time at the IFS offices in central London when they are not at their university.

### **Collaborate**

Students have the opportunity to find new collaborators for their research project, or to start a collaboration on something related to their field. Collaboration is encouraged at the Institute through seminars, research group meetings, events and workshops.

Students will be placed in a team whose research is aligned with their own interests. The

Associate Director leading the team will take responsibility for ensuring that the student is integrated into the team and has the chance to work with others in the team and meet with visiting senior academics.

### **Develop research independence**

The Studentship is also an opportunity for doctoral candidates to develop some research independence as they progress in their studies. The inspiration from learning and collaboration may prompt new ideas that can be further developed in the future.

### **Access to data and data analysis expertise**

IFS researchers use a range of large datasets and have HPC computing to facilitate data analysis. Students can apply to use these data in their research. Formal and informal training opportunities and support from colleagues are available for programming, including in particular in Stata and R.

### **Build new skills and networks**

Sitting within a research team at IFS will allow students to see policy-oriented research projects being framed and conducted, to see research that deals with issues of the day as they arise and to see dissemination of research to a wide range of audiences including those involved in policy formulation. IFS researchers not only carry out rigorous research, but also pride themselves on their ability to communicate complex findings to a wide audience. Whilst working at IFS, students will be in an environment where researchers are interacting with national, regional and international policymakers, journalists, NGOs and business people. Students will have the opportunity to attend training in communication skills and to attend events where researchers present to and meet a policy audience.

### **Award**

Funding to cover stipend, fees and any other allowances will be issued by the ESRC, as additional funding, to the relevant Doctoral Training Partnership's (DTP) or Centre for Doctoral Training's (CDT's) doctoral training grant.

Students will be expected to abide by IFS policies: for example, regarding data access and equality, diversity and inclusion.

### **Eligibility criteria**

Students must meet all the following eligibility criteria to be considered for the scheme.

- Students must be registered on or have been accepted into an accredited pathway within the UBEL DTP and have the support of their university to undertake the PhD whilst partially based at IFS.
- Students must be on a pathway eligible for ESRC funding. The

Studentships are intended to fund the whole or the majority of the duration of a PhD. This includes 1+3 and +3 pathways.

- Students with other funding sources may not be eligible for part or all of this award.
- The student's supervisor (or equivalent) must support their application and be willing to continue supervising them while they are at IFS.

### **Assessment criteria**

IFS will use the following criteria to assess applications. When preparing their application, students should demonstrate how they meet the following criteria.

#### Applicant

- Demonstrates top-level abilities in quantitative methods;
- Demonstrates academic excellence in economics or a closely related field, in an MSc or equivalent prior degree;
- Has interests in pursuing research that is aligned with the ESRC Institute's research agenda in microeconomic analysis of public policy.
- Is supported by strong references from the student's supervisor or equivalent and another referee who can speak to their suitability for the Studentship.
- Demonstrates communication skills and the ability to collaborate with others in a research setting.

#### Research proposal

- The research proposal is clear and demonstrates a good understanding of the topic and the potential for an original contribution to the field.
- Candidate demonstrates how they would benefit from their time at IFS.

#### Relevance to the IFS

- The applicant's research project should have close relevance to the research programme at IFS.

### **Application process**

#### **Timeline**

##### **Application stage**

Applications open

Application deadline

Outcomes communicated by

##### **Key Dates**

December 2025

6 February 2026

6 March 2026

## **How to apply**

Candidates should discuss the scheme with their supervisor and university department to gain their approval to participate. We recommend sharing the guidance note for universities with your department.

Candidates apply directly to IFS including the following documents.

- A covering letter setting out why you are interested in applying to IFS and what you hope to get out of your time here; please refer to the assessment criteria outlined above. Please also let us know if there are any individual circumstances you would like us to take into account, such as a disability.
- An outline of your research.
- Details of two academic referees (who will be invited to submit a reference). •  
Information about:
  - Which university you are registered with or have been accepted to for your PhD;
  - Which DTP you are or will be registered with;
  - Details of any other funding you are receiving or expect to receive during the course of your PhD.

The deadline for applications is 6 February 2026.

## **Assessment process**

All applicants are assessed on their application and references. Short-listed applicants will be invited to interviews. These may be held remotely.

Applications will first be checked for eligibility. All eligible applications will then be reviewed by the IFS Research Directors.

IFS reserves the right to reject applicants who do not meet the criteria at any stage.

## **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

We hope that the Studentship scheme will attract a diverse pool of applicants. All applications will be considered on their merits. Applicants can be of any nationality and applicants from under-represented groups are encouraged to apply. We welcome applicants from universities across the UBEL DTP. We recognise that there may be individual circumstances that we need to be aware of. We aim to accommodate specific needs and personal circumstances, but are reliant on applicants sharing this information with us. To discuss an adjustment to the application process please contact our team directly at [jobs@ifs.org.uk](mailto:jobs@ifs.org.uk). We will treat any information you disclose to us as sensitive and will handle it in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. You find out more information about how handle your personal data in our privacy notice.

## Guidance note for universities

- Funding to cover stipend, fees and any other allowances will be issued as additional funding to the relevant Doctoral Training Partnership's (DTP) or Centre for Doctoral Training's (CDTs) doctoral training grant.
- The funding for the research studentships is subject to the ESRC postgraduate eligibility requirements (including academic and residential eligibility requirements current at the time of nomination). The students must be on an accredited pathway within an ESRC accredited Doctoral Training Partnership or Centre for Doctoral Training. Fees, stipends and other support should be in accordance with/not exceeding the ESRC rates and guidelines applicable at the time. Host universities must comply with the requirements as detailed in the Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines (2015) and the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide. Students must also comply with the requirements set out in the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide. The above guidance documents and the funding guide are available to download from the ESRC website.
- Costs must be claimed by the relevant DTP or CDT within three months of the student's start date. ESRC reserves the right not to reimburse costs, either in part or in full, where costs are not claimed within three months.
- The university must ensure that the student's supervisor works with academics at IFS to supervise and develop the student.
- Students will be asked to sign IFS's Terms and Conditions.

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## Expectations for supervisors

Supervisors must commit to continuing to supervise their student while they are based at IFS.

Throughout the student's time at IFS the supervisor is welcome and encouraged to visit IFS and engage with events and activities happening at the Institute. Students and supervisors are also encouraged to explore potential collaborations with IFS researchers and Research Fellows and Associates. Collaborations can provide additional informal support for students as well as new avenues for research and connection

