



# Nuffield Research Placements

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What are Nuffield Research Placements?**

Nuffield Research Placements give sixth form students hands-on experience of a professional research environment through a 4 - 6 week placement in their summer holidays. The programme is run by the Nuffield Foundation and works through regional networks to link talented students with organisations undertaking research. We work with over 200 different organisations including universities, commercial companies, voluntary organisations and research institutes.

By working with professional researchers, students gain an insight into a wide variety of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) careers. By providing a placement, your organisation can give someone a life-changing opportunity that will help transform them into a future scientist.

### **Who are Nuffield students?**

A typical Nuffield student will be a 17 year-old student from a local school or college. They will have just completed their first year of an advanced or higher level course in science, technology, engineering or maths. Our students are intelligent, enthusiastic and committed, and will have been through a thorough selection process. We actively encourage participation from students who don't have a family history of going to university or who attend schools in less well-off areas. We make sure no-one is excluded on a financial basis by funding students' travel and providing bursaries to those most in need.

### **Why sign up?**

Being a Nuffield Project Provider offers you the chance to inspire the next generation of researchers, at the same time as moving forward with your own projects. It's an opportunity to give a 17 year old the chance to discover what a career in STEM (science, technology, engineering or maths) might be like – particularly if they have no family history of attending university or parental experience of STEM careers.

### **How will the scheme benefit me and my organisation?**

Nuffield students will require supervision and guidance, but in return they will make a significant contribution to your organisation. Our students work to a high standard on different types of projects, depending on the organisation and its priorities. For example, it could be a pilot project, or one that has been temporarily shelved due to lack of time, or a specific part of a larger project. It could be lab- or field-based. Work done by students often leads to published papers, and has been used as the basis for grant applications. In addition, supervising a student helps researchers to develop their own teaching and mentoring skills. This is particularly useful for PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, and staff looking to gain management experience. Many of our host organisations provide placements as part of their public engagement or corporate social responsibility work. Universities in particular are increasingly accountable for their access work, and supervising a Nuffield student shows that your institution is committed to increasing opportunities for young people in your local area. Host organisations are not required to make any kind of financial commitment.

### **What should the student do on arrival?**

The student will need a general induction to your organisation including appropriate Health & Safety training, introductions to other members of staff and familiarisation with the project. This will probably require introducing new techniques and tools, and pointing the student to background reading. Warn them that the first few days will be atypical with lots of new things to get familiar with. Set out their working hours and the conduct that is expected of them. Encourage them to ask questions and check their understanding of what you've told them.

### **What sort of work should I give them?**

Define the goals of the project as far as possible at the outset through discussion with the student. Try and give the project a self-contained identity even though it may be part of a bigger scheme of work. Allow the student to work independently where practical. As far as possible, the outcome should be reasonably achievable in the time available (4-6 weeks). The Nuffield Foundation hopes that this work will be a useful contribution to the host organisation. It can be useful to use the Gold CREST Award framework to define the project.

### **What is a Gold CREST Award?**

Your student may be working towards a Gold CREST (CREativity in Science and Technology) Award. This is a nationally recognised scheme to reward Science & Technology project work. To achieve a Gold CREST award the student must work on a project for 100 hours at a high level of science. Nuffield Research Placement projects easily fulfil the criteria and so students are encouraged to submit their work. The student will probably ask you to sign their 'Profile Form', which sets out a framework & criteria for the project. See [The British Science Association website](#) for further details.

### **How much direction should the student have over the research?**

Although there may be a tried and tested route to investigating the question posed at the start, a student should be given a chance to pose different ideas & be imaginative. Then guide them to the most suitable (which you will know from experience). Generating the solutions is the creative part of the project for students. "Creativity" for the student is a clever solution to a problem that is new to them - even though it may be old hat to you. Your encouragement & interest in what they are doing is extremely valuable.

### **Can the student have days off during their placement?**

You should consider sensible requests for time off, e.g. to go to university open days, as reasonable, but you should get in touch with your local Coordinator if your student requests a longer absence.

### **What do I do if I don't get on with the student?**

Speak to the Nuffield Coordinator or the person who facilitates the project within your organisation immediately, so that any problems can be addressed promptly. It may simply be that the student is shy to ask for explanations if they do not understand something.

### **What paperwork does the student fill in?**

They need to keep a log, diary or laboratory day book as appropriate within your organisation. They may also need to fill in the CREST 'Profile Form' week by week. This is a useful process for keeping track of how the project is going, and can be used at review meetings. CREST requires a minimum of five review meetings during the project – but these do not need to be lengthy or unduly formal. A Friday afternoon review of the week and planning for next week is an ideal time to do this. The student must also write a Report at the end of the project & present their work at the Nuffield Celebration Event.

### **What format should the student's report take?**

This is not specified by Nuffield or CREST, it is a record of the student's work for them and for your organisation. It should be in the region of 10-20 pages and a minimum of 800 words long. Please assist the student in writing their report and check it for accuracy & confidentiality issues. The report will be assessed by someone who may not be expert in your field of research, so please ensure that jargon is explained and that the title would make sense to the student's teachers or parents.

### **What about confidentiality?**

Please discuss confidentiality with your line manager within your organisation. Confidential work can be written up in the report in general generic terms. In rare circumstances where this is not feasible the report could possibly be assessed by someone inside the organisation so that "prior disclosure" is not breached.

### **Can commercial organisations or businesses supervise undergraduate research bursaries?**

Yes. As long as there is a STEM research project for the student, placements can take place anywhere.

### **What are the tax implications of providing a placement for a Nuffield Research Placement student?**

Scholarships, exhibitions, bursaries etc. held by a person receiving full-time instruction at university, technical college or similar educational establishment are exempted from income tax by Section 776 ITTOIA 2005 (previously Section 331 ICTA 1988).

### **How do I submit a project for the scheme?**

You will need to [contact your local coordinator](#) in order to be set up on our online database. Once you have been registered by the coordinator, you will be sent an email with a link to a page where you can enter your project details (e.g. a description of the proposed work, dates that you are available to supervise a student etc.). Please note **you are not able to register yourself** on the system; this must be done by your local coordinator.