

UCL, Bloomsbury and East London DTP International Institutional Visit (IIV) Competition Winter 2025

Guidance Notes

Please ensure you have carefully read these guidance notes before completing the *Application Form for International Institutional Visit (IIV)*.

These IIV guidance notes are for all UBEL DTP funded students enrolled at UCL, Birkbeck, LSHTM, SOAS, University of East London, and University of Greenwich.

Competition Opens	12th December 2025
Application Deadline	12th February 2026
Outcomes Announced	6th March 2026

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Points to bear in mind throughout the selection process

- The competition provides funding to extend your studentship by up to 13 weeks.
- Applicants may submit only one application per academic year, and only one IIV award may be granted during the ESRC studentship. However, up to three separate IIVs can be made to the same host organisation, as long as the total duration of the visits does not exceed 13 weeks.
- The international visit must be planned for the **2025-26** academic year.

- Two IIV competitions are held each year: one in the summer and one in the winter.
- The scheme is run as a competition and the visit should not be designed as an integral part of a student's research programme.
- The competition is not to be confused with overseas fieldwork and any related costs.
- We encourage applicants to diversify their profiles by scheduling visits to institutions and countries where they have not worked or studied in the past, rather than applying to institutions in the same city as their fieldwork location.
- When completing the application, the exact number of weeks for the visit must be specified. However, the timeline for the visit can remain broad (e.g., Spring 2026).
- Applicants must submit the following three documents as part of their IIV application:
 - i. The applicant's Case for Support.
 - ii. Confirmation of support from the applicant's supervisor.
 - iii. Confirmation of support from the proposed host university, provided in the form of a formal letter from the institution.

ESRC International Institutional Visits (IIVs)

ESRC-funded students in the '+3.5' (or equivalent) component of their studentship are eligible to apply for financial support for an International Institutional Visit (IIV) within their studentship period to visit overseas universities or esteemed research organisations.

The IIV competition is intended to support and encourage the international engagement of eligible ESRC-funded students. The scheme funds an extension to the studentship of up to thirteen weeks, plus travel and subsistence costs as determined by the UBEL DTP.

This financial support and additional time allows students to:

- undertake additional specialist research training not available in the UK;
- develop language skills;
- establish research links that will be beneficial to their current or future academic career;
- disseminate early research findings;
- attend and participate in seminars where directly relevant to their research.

Eligibility Requirements

- The IIV must be directly related to the applicant's PhD research and cannot commence within the first three months of the +3.5 research component of the studentship.
- Visits taking place in the final year of the studentship must be *completed* at least three months before the end of the award and before the extension period begins.

- Applicants must be in the +3.5 research component (or equivalent, if on a 4-Year Route) of their studentship to apply for an IIV, subject to the timing criteria.
- If in the first year of the 1+3.5 route, applicants may apply for IIV funding to be undertaken in the **2026/27** academic year, provided they will be in the +3.5 research training component during that year and meet the timing criteria.
- Visits must involve a Higher Education institution or an organisation with a substantive research reputation, and must be based outside of the UK.

Application Review Process

All eligible applications will be considered by relevant members of the UBEL Board. Applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- **Purpose and Alignment with Doctoral Work:** The Case for Support must clearly outline the purpose of the visit, demonstrating how it integrates into the overall PhD programme and will provide 'added value' to your research.
- **Detailed Work Plan:** A clear work plan must be provided, listing specific activities that build upon your previous research and training. It should demonstrate how these activities directly relate to and will advance your future research plans.
- **Contribution to Academic Career:** Applicants must explain how the visit will contribute to their current and future academic career, emphasising the added value it will bring to their research and professional development.
- **Supervisor's Support:** Your supervisor must provide a recommendation indicating that the proposed visit is highly appropriate and well-timed within your overall programme of study. They must also confirm that supervision will continue during the visit and outline any arrangements to facilitate this.
- **Host Organisation's Support:** Confirmation from the host institution, including an unreserved recommendation that the visit should take place.
- **Documentation and Completeness:** Ensure that your application is comprehensive and includes all required documents, such as detailed costings. You need to input the exact amount you are requesting in advance of the costs, weekly amount (£70 x weeks on placement), and the total.

Engaging with a potential host organisation

1. Discuss potential organisations with your academic supervisor and peers (you could also contact relevant careers services at your institution – they will guide you how to find relevant organisations)
2. Contact organisations/research partners as early as possible: be as clear as possible about the purpose of your visit and planned work
3. Don't wait too long for a response (1 week) and start emailing other organisations if you have not heard back
4. Use email to make informal enquiry and follow-up soon thereafter with zoom call to speak with person
5. Ask very specific questions: what will you do? Where will you stay (dedicated workspace)? Who will be mentoring you?

Funding Information

There are three elements to the IIV funding:

- i. An extension to the studentship; both your funding end date and thesis submission date will be extended by the duration of your trip (you will also continue to receive your monthly stipend during the duration of your IIV).
- ii. A Front-end amount (The front-end element depends on the country to which you are travelling and the rates are published in the *UBEL DTP Schedule of [Funding Rates](#)*. This sum is designed to be used as a contribution toward initial flights and accommodation costs)
- iii. A weekly cost element (The costs element is paid at a flat rate of £70 per week).

For example, a successful IIV application for two separate visits to an organisation in France totalling six weeks:

Front end amount	£510
Costs element (£70x6)	<u>£420</u>
Total	£930

You would continue to receive your stipend while on the Visit(s) and your tuition fees would be paid.

The award would be extended by six weeks in total (therefore, a submission date of 30 September 2026 would be extended to 14 November 2026) and you would receive your stipend during this extension.

International Institutional Visits are not designed to cover fieldwork expenses, as these are supported via other funding mechanisms at the DTP. However, it is recognised that under certain circumstances an

element of fieldwork might be undertaken during an IIV. These circumstances should be clearly justified in your application.

Travel Information

1. Successful recipients are responsible for ensuring that their passport and other travel documents are up to date and that applications have been made for visas, where appropriate.
2. If the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against visiting the country concerned, your visit will not be authorised. Travel advice is updated here: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
3. Recipients of IIV funding must ensure they complete their institution's own Risk Assessment and Travel Insurance documentation prior to travel.

After your Visit

All successful applicants are required to submit a brief End of Visit report to UBEL DTP within two weeks of your return to the UK. This report will be published on the [UBEL Research Blog](#) to help showcase the scheme to other ESRC-funded students within the DTP. You may wish to include the following sections:

- Aims and objectives of the visits
- What went well
- What was achieved
- Future plans as a result of the visit
- Challenges