



MRC Cognition  
and Brain  
Sciences Unit



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

## Application Guidelines

### MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit Undergraduate Summer Placement Scheme 2025

**Monday 7th July – Friday 15th August**

The Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit at the University of Cambridge offers six-week summer placements to four selected students who are studying at a UK or Republic of Ireland university for their undergraduate bachelor degree and are in their penultimate year of study. The summer placements are suitable for those studying psychology, cognitive sciences, neuroscience or a related discipline, who are considering postgraduate study

We **are committed to widening participation** in the Summer Placement Scheme at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, University of Cambridge and will be using positive action under the Equality Act 2010 to tackle the underrepresentation of, and to overcome the disadvantage experienced by, certain groups.

This document provides information about eligibility for the scheme, how to apply, what you will be asked in the Application Form, and the type of information that you will need to send to us, if you are asked to give evidence in support of any of the Widening Participation criteria that you have selected on the Application Form.

**Please read these guidelines carefully before making your application.**

If you have questions please email [internship@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk](mailto:internship@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk)

#### 1. Important Dates

- Applications open: **Monday 17th March 2025**
- Application deadline: **Sunday 6th April (23:59) 2025<sup>1</sup>**
- Interviews (online) for shortlisted candidates: **Week of Monday 12th May 2025**
- Scheme: **Monday 7th July – Friday 15th August 2025**

#### 2. Aim of the Scheme

The aim of the scheme is to encourage and facilitate participation in postgraduate studies in psychology, cognitive sciences, neuroscience and related fields. The scheme offers an opportunity for interested and motivated students who are considering postgraduate study to:

- get hands on research experience
- acquire and develop a range of skills
- interact with fellow summer placement students, postgraduate students and research staff

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<sup>1</sup> Applications will be considered in a gathered field after the deadline.

### 3. Scheme Details, Accommodation and Stipend

The scheme duration is six weeks, working up to a maximum of 37 hours per week (Mon- Fri, hourly working pattern to be agreed with your supervisor; placement students will accrue a maximum annual leave equivalent of approximately 4 days), and you are expected to participate for the full six weeks.

Summer placement students will join a current CBU research group and participate in the research activities of that group as agreed with your supervisor. For details of the specific projects available, please see the [MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences website](#). You will work in a shared office at the CBU alongside other summer placement students. You will be encouraged to interact with postgraduate students and research staff informally and attend relevant meetings.

Summer placement students will have the opportunity to rent accommodation from [Downing College](#), free of charge, for the duration of the scheme including weekends, from Saturday 5th July until Saturday 16th August 2025. This accommodation is a single standard room in a mixed-gender housing block close to the main Downing site, with shared bathrooms and a kitchenette. Alternatively, students may wish to make their own arrangements.

Summer placement students will receive a stipend payment of £2710.62 at the end of the placement. The stipend is calculated using the National Living Wage of £12.21 per hour.

### 4. Assessment Criteria

Applicants will be assessed on the basis of both academic achievement and academic potential within the context of their education to date. We are looking for indications that you could thrive in the challenging teaching and learning environment of postgraduate study, given appropriate experience and training.

We are also committed to widening participation. Accordingly, we warmly welcome applications from individuals from groups that are currently underrepresented in postgraduate study in the life sciences and/or who have experienced some form of educational disadvantage, and will take widening participation factors into account in our selection process. We will be using positive action under the Equality Act 2010 where appropriate<sup>2</sup>. The University of Cambridge is committed to [equality of opportunity](#) and selection will be based on merit.

### 5. Application Method

You must apply to the scheme by completing the online Application Form, which can be accessed via the link on the [MRC CBU website](#). We will not consider applications that are sent to us via other means. The Application Form asks a number of questions, details of which are explained in this document.

### 6. Eligibility

- You must be studying for an undergraduate bachelor degree in psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience or a related discipline at a UK or Republic of Ireland higher education institution (this does not include integrated master degree courses);
- You should be on course for a 1<sup>st</sup> or a 2i;

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<sup>2</sup> The University will monitor the impact of any positive action taken and intends to use positive action only

- You should have an interest in undertaking a postgraduate degree (MPhil, MSc or PhD)
- You must be in the penultimate year of your bachelor's degree at the time of application (e.g. year 2 of a 3-year degree);
- You must be available to participate in the full duration of the Summer Placement Scheme from 7th July to 15th August 2025 between the hours of 9am- 5pm (with the exact hours and pattern, to be agreed with your supervisor, up to the maximum of 37 hours per week)<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Who should not apply?**

- Applicants who have previous significant research experience (equivalent to at least four weeks or more full time).
- Applicants who are currently studying for an integrated master's degree.
- Non-UK or non-Irish citizens who are studying at a Republic of Ireland higher education institution.

### **7. Secondary Education**

Please list your post-16 years qualifications (e.g., A-Levels, International Baccalaureate etc.), subjects and grades attained.

### **8. Undergraduate Education**

Please list your course modules and grades attained during your undergraduate degree so far.

If you have any other academic achievements, or have achieved any academic awards, please list them in brief.

### **9. Referee**

Your referee should be either a tutor or another academic at your current institution. If you are shortlisted, your referee may be contacted and asked to provide a reference. As part of their reference, your referee will be asked to comment on your Widening Participation Status for the purpose of the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit Undergraduate Student Summer Placement Scheme. We strongly advise, therefore, that you ensure that you make your referee aware of any relevant circumstances concerning the widening participation criteria you intend to select on the application form and check they will be happy to provide a reference if requested.

### **10. Research Experience, Interests and Motivations**

We would like to know about any experience of research you may have had during your undergraduate course, either at your current institution or through another organisation. We warmly welcome applications from undergraduates currently studying at higher education institutions where research or lab experience may **not** be as readily available as in more research-intensive institutions.

Please outline any research skills and experience you have acquired (i) as part of your course; (ii) in addition to your course either at your current institution or through another organisation. (max 200 words)

Please explain (i) your reasons for applying for a summer placement; and (ii) how you would

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<sup>3</sup> Summer placement student will accrue annual leave equivalent to approximately 4 days.

benefit from this research experience. (max 300 words)

Please explain which area(s) of psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience or related disciplines you are most interested in and why. (max 200 words)

Please rank the projects listed in order of your preference (for details of each project see information listed on [MRC CBU website](#)).

In the application form, you will have the option to explain why you are interested in each project. Please do this for at least two projects (max 100 words for each).

Your answer to the questions in this section will help us to gauge which project you might potentially be most suited for. You will be considered for all projects. In the case you are selected for a summer placement you may not be offered your preferred project. Please note that we will not be able to change the research project you have been offered.

## 11. Widening Participation Criteria

We invite you to indicate if you come from a group that is currently underrepresented in postgraduate study in the life sciences and/or to have experienced some form of educational disadvantage.

We also invite you to explain any circumstances that you feel have presented obstacles to your educational development and how you managed them. (max 200 words)

If you are shortlisted we may contact you to request evidence to support the Widening Participation criteria you have selected in order to ensure transparency in our assessment processes and fairness for all. Acceptable evidence is set out in the table below.

Criteria	Evidence
Free School Meals	A letter or other notification from your school
From one of the most deprived areas of the country: check that your postcode at point of entry to undergraduate study ranks within one of the 50% most deprived neighbourhoods (i.e. within deciles 1-5) on the relevant government Index of Multiple Deprivation: England ( <a href="#">here</a> ), Scotland ( <a href="#">here</a> ), Wales ( <a href="#">here</a> ), and Northern Ireland ( <a href="#">here</a> ).	Proof of your postcode at point of entry to undergraduate study

From an area where it is unusual for people to go to university: your postcode at point of entry to undergraduate study falls into Q1 or 2 of the government's POLAR4 classification (check here: <a href="#">POLAR search tool</a> )	Proof of your postcode at point of entry to undergraduate study
Entered university from a Care background or as a Foyer resident	A letter from the Local Authority or Foyer confirming this
You are in receipt of full state support for maintenance for this course of undergraduate study	Student Finance Notification of Award letter for the full amount of maintenance received

## 12. Disability

We invite you to indicate whether you consider yourself to have a disability.

If there are any adjustments that would help us provide you with support you need to participate in the scheme, please provide details. (max 100 words)

Any disabilities you declare are not considered in the selection process.

## 13. Final Checks

If there is anything else you would like to tell us then please do so here. (max 100 words)

Please ensure you are happy with your responses then submit the form.

You will receive an email confirmation of your application within 48 hours of the closing date (i.e. you should receive an email by Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> of April). If you do not receive this email, you can contact us at [internship@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk](mailto:internship@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk)