



## Terms of Reference – Urban Lab Graduate Student Placement

### Purpose

This document aims to provide guidelines and establish the roles and responsibilities for key members involved in the Urban Lab Fellowship with Westminster City Council (WCC). The document also highlights the many benefits students will gain when joining this programme.

### Objective of the Urban Lab Graduate Student Placement:

This programme is designed to give students the opportunity to experience working in local government, in a role that enables them to apply research skills and subject-matter expertise gained from their coursework to real-world policy problems, while collaborating with highly skilled analysts and policy practitioners from a wide range of specialist backgrounds.

The programme aims to match students to policy areas relevant to their studies, and they will undertake research that contributes to the council's knowledge base on key policy topics, a crucial underpinning to its evidence-led policymaking. Thus, students will have the chance to make a positive contribution to local policy while simultaneously developing a range of professional skills.

**WCC offers two different types of placements:** The Graduate Project Placement, in which students will contribute research to on-going team-based projects at the Council, and the Graduate Dissertation Placement, in which students will undertake independent research for their graduate dissertations on a topic that represents a key policy priority for a team at WCC. In both forms of the programme, students will be expected to take ownership of their research agenda, and to work independently, but will be assigned to a local team with opportunities for collaboration and will be provided with guidance and support throughout the duration of their placement. These placements are hybrid, although we do encourage students to come into the office as much as they can to take full advantage of the wider benefits of the programme.

### Placement timeline:

Timelines and durations of Graduate Placements are flexible and may be mutually agreed based on the needs of the WCC supervisor and students' availability.

- **Dissertation students-** This placement typically takes place over a period of approximately 3 months, usually during the summer.
- **Project students-** Project placements typically take place over a period of approximately 3 months, for 1-3 days a week, depending on individual project needs and student course requirements.

#### **Structure of the Programme:**

- **Induction:** Students will be welcomed by WCC analysts, Urban Lab team as well as other key staff to ensure they are well integrated into the team and have the knowledge and support they need for their placement.
- **Work-in progress workshops:** Workshops will be created for students to allow them to ask questions about their project and discuss any challenges they may be facing.
- **Urban Lab Student Symposium:** This is an annual half-day event, designed for students to present their project or dissertation to a variety of stakeholders in the council.
- **Expected output:** Students are expected to produce a final report for their project. This can be in the form of a presentation or a 5-page summary report document. For dissertation students this will be expected after their academic dissertation is submitted to focus on completion their dissertation. Final document should be well-aligned with WCC supervisor's initial research question and be clearly tied to policy outcomes/recommendations.

#### **Benefits of the programme:**

- Undertake research that will create real impact, supporting local government policy development and decision making.
- Learn how research and analysis is undertaken in a local authority, and gain exposure to a broad set of research topics.
- Expand professional network and skills by collaborating with a range of analysts.
- Dedicated buddy who will provide informal check ins with students during the programme.
- Tailored workshops to support with the student's project.
- Annual Student Symposium - This is a half day created for students to present their project or dissertation to a variety of stakeholders in the council.
- Opportunity to interact with other graduate students from leading institutions
- Develop key professional skills, including written and verbal communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, time management etc.
- In recognition of students' efforts, the best student project, as judged by the programme coordinators in consultation with WCC Supervisors, will receive an Urban Lab Award.
- Opportunities to receive valuable feedback on the student's research from professional analysts, policy officers, and other graduate students

## Key members involved:

Who	Definition	Overall Responsibility
<b>Academic Supervisor</b>	A member of a university faculty who offers academic guidance to one or more students in their study programme.	Provide primary academic supervision to students doing a dissertation.
<b>University Coordinator</b>	University coordinator helps students from their faculty gain placements.	Checking in on the progress of all students from their university faculty doing an internship or dissertation-based placement with WCC.
<b>WCC Supervisors</b>	Analysts and/ or service managers working in WCC offering project support and guidance to placement students.	Manage students during the programme, providing support and resources needed for the project to be completed.
<b>Dissertation student</b>	A student doing a graduate dissertation-based placement.	Student to work on a project that is for their dissertation, while gaining work experience.
<b>Project student</b>	A student doing a graduate project-based placement.	Student to work on a project, while gaining work experience.
<b>Urban Lab Contact</b>	A WCC staff member who supports the coordination and process of bringing students in, to work on a project for their dissertation or internship at WCC.	Oversees the process of bringing students in, to work on a project for their dissertation or internship and coordinating with University Coordinators.

### Academic Supervisor is expected to:

- Act as a primary point of contact for the student regarding their dissertation project
- Agree the frequency of supervision meetings with students
- Keep in touch with students to ensure that the project meets the university requisite quality standard.
- Provide guidance and review students' progress throughout their project.
- Advise the student on the research plan, timetable for producing the project and obtaining ethical approval.

### University Coordinator is expected to:

- Specify to the WCC supervisor they are the contact to speak to regarding the students' progress and wellbeing.
- Keep in touch with student to learn about their placement experience
- If needed organise at least two progress meetings with the student discussing the progress of the project, student experience, and put in place any necessary changes.
- Keep in touch with the WCC supervisor during the placement period to get an update on student placement.

**The WCC Supervisor is expected to:**

- Keep in contact with the student to ensure they have the resources and guidance needed to deliver a project and meet the objective for that project.
- Support the student to check policy relevance, agree project scope, ethical approval, connect them to the right colleagues, set up their access to data, IT, relevant documentation etc.
- Have check-ins with student to ensure their work are meeting the standard requirement to complete the project.
- **Dissertation student:** Encourage the student doing a dissertation to use their academic supervisor as a primary contact for support regarding project standards and methodologies for addressing the research question.
- Be aware of the academic supervisor's relevant contact details and contact if necessary
- Encourage student to keep in touch with their University Coordinator if needed
- **Project student:** Encourage the student doing an internship to stay in touch with their University Coordinator.
- Provide short update (email or in a meeting) to University Coordinator about students' performance. This should be done halfway through the placement and towards the end of the student's placement.

**Urban Lab Key Contact is expected to:**

- Send Terms of Reference document to WCC Supervisor, Academic Supervisor, University Coordinator and Students to understand their role.
- Be aware of students' WCC supervisor, Academic Coordinator and their contact details and contact if necessary.
- Encourage students to attend events and workshops to support their professional development and integration into WCC and project team

**Students are expected to:**

- **Dissertation students** are expected to work closely with their Academic Supervisor and use them as a primary contact to provide guidance regarding the project to meet their university's expected standards.
- **Project students** are expected to keep in close contact with their Academic Coordinator, establish frequency of communication and attend any required progress meetings regarding their placement with them.
- **Both Project and Dissertation students are expected to:**

- Communicate with their WCC Supervisor as necessary to complete their project, ensuring they have the right resources and data.
- Work with their WCC Supervisor to ensure project is in line with WCC research guidelines.
- Work as a professional, responsible researcher accountable for the development of their own project.
- Gather relevant information from contacts (internal and external) to answer research project.
- Maintaining ethical standards in the design, conduct and reporting of research. The WCC Supervisor will explain the [Council's Data Protection guidelines](#) to you.
- Hybrid working is permitted. However, coming into the office is strongly encouraged to give you a greater opportunity to collaborate with WCC analysts.
- [Comply with WCC Code of Conduct](#)
- Produce a final report for their project. This can be in a form of a presentation or a 5-page summary report document. For dissertation students this will be expected after their academic dissertation is submitted to focus on completion their dissertation.
- This report should document clear policy recommendations and will be in line with the objectives set out by the Westminster supervisor.

**Urban Lab Key Contacts** manage the Graduate Students Placements at WCC. They work with academic partners to identify opportunities for placements at the Council, oversee the process of interviewing and matching students to individual placement opportunities, and manage key Placement activities, including the Annual Student Symposium and work-in-progress workshops. The WCC Supervisor, Academic Supervisor, University Coordinator and Students should reach out to them if they have questions or concerns regarding the overall placement structure and process, suggestions for future placement topics, feedback on current or past placements, or ideas for improvement of the programme in the future.

**Contact Us:**

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**TOR Review-** This document will be reviewed on a yearly basis and will be updated as appropriate. Last updated 03/01/23.