



## Designing Professional Summer Opportunities for Doctoral and Post-Graduate Students

Organizations and companies may develop opportunities that further their missions, goals, projects, and programs while engaging doctoral students and post-graduates for short-term projects that support those students' research and professional growth. Students seek out *fellowships*, *research assistant-ships*, and *consultancies* as a means of obtaining financial support for dissertation research during the summer months and the academic year. As students' research is generally timely and on-point, this research is often beneficial to organizations as well.

### OVERVIEW

Opportunities may range from a few weeks to a full academic year and may be paid hourly or on a project basis to support the student in “*developing a successful program of research and increasing mastery in teaching*,” where they “*undertake a research project that will catalyze their future program of research*.” To be competitive in this process, you will want to consider the following tips and best practices as well as the other sources of project work and compare your design to those opportunities.

### Compensation

We recommend paying students based on market rates for the role, sector, and geographic region of work. We also understand that market rates and/or financial remuneration is not always possible for the organization. In that case, in order to create more competitive opportunities, you might offer a stipend or other benefit(s), such as reimbursement for travel cost or free entry into a conference.

### Best Practices for Developing Project / Position Descriptions

Building some kind of structure into the opportunity will help inspire the potential candidates to envision their contribution to your project as well as determine whether the opportunity is a good fit. To do this, consider the following:

- Providing *specific details* of the project (including envisioned outcome), *qualifications* necessary for success, and *opportunities for contribution*/learning.
- Providing details of the project's or organization's *mission and vision* and allowing the student to suggest project details according to mutual fit and interest.
- Providing a few *sample ideas* to help structure student responses to the opportunity – and to offer the opportunity for students to help design the experience with you.

### Setting Expectations: Responsibilities, Outcomes, Necessary Qualifications

In our experience, it is useful for employers to set the following expectations ahead of time, at least in general, and then modify based on the mutual interest of the employer and successful candidate.

In setting expectations, it is important to:

- Identify what *steps, actions, deliverables*, etc. the student and organization will each be responsible for.
- Define what *outcomes* are expected and when—and what are the metrics by which the project will be deemed successfully completed.
- Clarify what *qualifications* are necessary for the student to be successful in the position. Qualifications may include skills, experience, knowledge-base, character traits, etc.



## Setting Expectations: Benefits, Guidance, Communication, Interaction

Employers may choose to set the following expectations ahead of time or determine them based on the mutual interest of the employer and successful candidate.

- What benefits are available that you are prepared to offer.
- Whether you will offer guidance and in what form (mentorship, supervision, weekly meetings, etc.).
- Best mode and schedule of communication between you and the successful candidate.
- Whether there will be a little or a lot of interaction available.

## Doctoral Fellowship Competitive Landscape

Sometimes the best tips are from existing opportunities. Below you will find more information on current fellowships and grants in the doctoral space:

Visit <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/financialaid/fellowships-grants/additional> for information about the most common sources for grants and fellowships. *Please note, most of these fellowships are for 1-year programs or for work in specific geographic regions.*

Other potential opportunities include the **Dean's Postdoctoral Fellowship** that emphasizes “*developing a successful program of research and increasing mastery in teaching,*” where students “*undertake a research project of their choosing that will catalyze their future program of research.*”

- Up to \$10,000 awarded. More details here: <http://scholarshipdb.net/jobs-in-United-States/Hgse-Dean-s-Postdoctoral-Fellowship-For-Faculty-Development-Harvard-University=jhZNc7SD5RGUPAAlkGUTnw.html>

The **Center for African Studies** offers summer grants here: <https://africa.harvard.edu/for-students/grad-students/graduate-student-grants-fellowships/#Summer%20Grants>

These grants are available to students whose status and projects meet the following initial criteria:

- Full-time continuing Harvard student;
- Purpose of travel: for thesis research, internship opportunity, or study abroad;
- Research/work/study in any African country (*check Harvard [student travel policies](#) for any restrictions*); and
- Minimum duration of eight weeks.

And **The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs (WCFA)** offers pre- and mid-dissertation grants here: [http://wcfia.harvard.edu/funding/student/pre\\_mid\\_dissertation](http://wcfia.harvard.edu/funding/student/pre_mid_dissertation)

- **Pre-dissertation grants** are available to doctoral students who are in the early stages of dissertation research, that is, who are exploring or beginning to launch a project.
- **Mid-dissertation grants** are available for doctoral students who have been conducting research and are midway in the process of completing their dissertations who have not yet reached the final year of completion.
- **Use of the grants:** The grants may be used at any time during the summer or academic year for dissertation-related travel, training, or for the compilation of data sets relevant to the student's research. The mid-dissertation grants are intended for specific research projects, research trips, or special needs that arise for students rather than for general dissertation-writing support.

**Questions?** The Career Services Office is happy to provide support and guidance in developing and reviewing your opportunities. Please contact Rachel Gakenheimer, Internships Manager, at [rachel\\_gakenheimer@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:rachel_gakenheimer@gse.harvard.edu) with any questions, or feel free to contact Clara Lau, Assistant Director, Ed.D. & Ph.D. Programs, directly at 617.495.8445 or [clara\\_lau@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:clara_lau@gse.harvard.edu).