



ACED PhD studentship rotations

A guide and advice based on my experience by Lucie Gourmet, UCL ACED PhD student.

Introduction

ACED offers the opportunity to undertake a 4-year PhD studentship, with the first year of the Programme allowing students to develop their project as well as training in different disciplines relevant to early detection. To facilitate this, students are strongly encouraged to undertake up to two rotations in different groups, either in their own host institution, or where relevant and funding allows at a different ACED Centre. The ACED PhD programme provides unique support by offering a multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional approach to training.

“I would advise students to make the most out of this opportunity! I really enjoyed my rotations, you will learn a lot, travel and create a diverse network.”

Listen to my account of my first year as an ACED student working with my supervisor Prof Simon Walker-Samuel at UCL and my rotations in the group of Dr Jamie Blundell lab at Cambridge and Prof Parag Mallick at Stanford.

[View the recording here.](#)

General information

The ACED PhD Programme provides added value to your PhD studies. Although not mandatory, they offer an excellent opportunity to expand your skills, knowledge and experience. Your university's student guidelines and regulations take precedent so rotations can only be undertaken with the support of your Principal PhD Supervisor.

The ACED Programme offers flexibility and encourages rotations to be undertaken as part of the training in the first year but can also be part of the research project later in your training if appropriate.

The ACED Skills Exchange and Development Award is open to PhD students; you can apply for additional funding for rotations to another Centre if your PhD Studentship cannot cover all the necessary expenses. Please bear in mind this is not guaranteed.

If you have any questions regarding rotations, particularly at another ACED Centre, ask your Principal PhD Supervisor or your local ACED Programme Manager who will be able to help you.

Choosing a supplementary ACED Supervisor

If your intention is to visit another ACED Centre as one of your rotations, then finding a Supervisor from that Centre is an essential requirement before starting to plan. Here are some resources to help you find potential supervisors from the different Centres or ask your local ACED Programme Manager:

UCL	ACED funded research at UCL 2022 list of PhD Supervisors
Stanford	Canary Center at Stanford members
Cambridge	Early Cancer Institute scientists
Manchester	ACED funded research at the CRUK Manchester Centre
OHSU	Researchers at the Cancer Early Detection Advanced Research Center (CEDAR)

Once you have identified a suitable potential supervisor then send them an e-mail explaining:

- Who you are (ACED PhD student, which Centre)
- What your project is on.
- Why you would like to collaborate.
- Include some more details, for example when you would like the rotation to take place, how long you would like to visit for, whether you would like to continue the collaboration after the rotation as part of your PhD project.

If you receive a positive response and they are interested, proceed to arranging a meeting to discuss further to see if the rotation would be a good fit for your training and research plans.

Planning the rotation

Congratulations! Once you have managed to agree with a collaborative ACED researcher when the rotation will happen you need to plan ahead. Here are some tips based on my experience:

Accommodation

I found there were two general choices:

- Student accommodation offered by the University from the ACED Centre you are visiting (e.g. in-college accommodation)
- Airbnb (not my preference due to the risk of scams)

Expenses

Talk to your principal PhD Supervisor or ACED programme manager to understand how to pay for accommodation, flights and other expenses (UCL is managed electronically through their finance system. Travel arrangements are made through the university approved travel agent and paid directly so I didn't have to pay up front myself and wait to be reimbursed)

Visa

If you are a UK student travelling to a US Centre then you will need a J1 visa. There are a lot of steps to the application process but your university will help guide you through the procedure. If you are a US student planning to visit a UK Centre there will also be student visa requirements, check with the university you are planning to visit well in advance.

Applying for additional funding

If there isn't enough funding from your studentship grant to cover all the expenses for a planned rotation, then you can apply for extra funding from the [ACED Skills Exchange and Development Travel Award](#) scheme. PhD students are eligible for funding, but the application must be made in the name of your supervisor (for admin reasons). Speak to your local ACED Programme Manager for details and how to make an application.

My final piece of advice was that I really enjoyed my rotations which were a fantastic experience, I would thoroughly recommend all ACED PhD students to take advantage of this valuable opportunity,