



STS Summer Studentships

UCL Department of Science and Technology Studies offers 9 paid research studentships for work experience associated with staff and alumni research within and beyond STS. Up to nine studentships are available.

Each studentship involves 80 hours in total, envisioned as approximately ten hours work per week for eight weeks. The work must commence in June 2021. It must be completed by the end of August 2021. The precise distribution of hours will be agreed between the post holder and the project manager.

Pay will be £12.93 per hour, totalling 80 hours over the course of the studentship. (London living wage currently is £10.85 per hour).

To be eligible for consideration, applicants must demonstrate general knowledge and understanding of the subject area and must be a UCL student – some relevant experience in STS is essential (e.g. students should have taken at least a couple of modules in STS at BSc or MSc level). General skills for the post include: excellent time management, ability to work independently and to multi-task, excellent communication skills, and ability to take initiative. UCL student status is required for this position.

These studentships are intended for both undergraduate and postgraduate students to offer paid work experience in research. Research postgraduate students are not eligible to apply. Employment requires a right-to-work in the UK.

Application procedure

Those wishing to apply must submit a one-page CV plus a one-page personal statement describing why they are a good fit for the project. In addition, please provide the name of one academic referee who can be asked to advise during the selection process. Applicants must submit a customised personal statement for each project they wish to be considered for.

Letters of application, CV and personal statements must be received no later than **Friday, 16 April 2021 at 17:00 PM (UK Time)**. These must be sent by email to Victoria Mounsey: v.mounsey@ucl.ac.uk. Please include the word “studentship” in the subject line of your email.

Project 1 – Self-driving cars on trial - an investigative podcast

Supervisor: Dr Jack Stilgoe

Area: Emerging technologies

Project description

The intern will work with Dr Jack Stilgoe to develop a podcast that looks to explore the reality of self-driving car testing in cities. This project may also be international, working with researchers in the US (tbc). There is also the possibility of helping with data analysis on the Driverless Futures project (tbc)

Skills required:

- Administrative skills;
- Communicating and setting up interviews with engineers, policymakers and local communities;
- Audio skills - editing interviews;
- Journalism skills - developing scripts and storyboards.

Project 2 – Editing three notebooks of Humphry Davy

Supervisor: Prof Frank James

Area: Notebook and transcription editing

Project description

The AHRC recently awarded a three-year grant of £1,000,000 to a project to image and digitise the notebooks of Humphry Davy (1778-1829) which are held in the Royal Institution and Cornwall Archives. Davy was the foremost chemist and scientific lecturer of early nineteenth-century England, a scientific administrator who provided, not always successfully, practical scientific advice, including inventing a form of the miners' safety lamp. He was also a poet whose work was praised by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and is very much seen by historians today as one of the key figures of early English 'Romanticism'.

The project is led by Professor Sharon Ruston of the Department of English Literature, Lancaster University. There are a number of Co-Is, including Frank James of this department, an acknowledged expert on Davy. In addition, there is a Senior PDRA, Dr Andrew Lacey who has overall management of the project, and there will be two additional PDRAs who will begin work in April. The successful applicant for the STS Summer Internship will work mostly with Professor James, but may need to interact with other members of the project team.

The project stems from a pilot (also AHRC funded) designed to test the concept of using Zooniverse to transcribe the notebooks. Each notebook was transcribed independently three times by Zooniverse volunteers. The transcriptions were then compared with each other and with the original to establish a final text. This pilot met its aim of successfully imaging and transcribing five of Davy's notebooks which can be found at <http://humphrydavy.org.uk/notebooks/>.

We were additionally able to image a further three notebooks and prepare Zooniverse transcriptions of them. The pilot ended before these notebooks could be completely processed. The purpose of this internship project would be to complete work on these notebooks which would then be placed on the website as the first outcome of the new project. This would thus be a discrete and identifiable piece of work which the successful applicant would be able to include on their cv.

Skills required:

Ideally the applicant would have an interest in early nineteenth century chemistry and its cultural role. Training would be provided to obtain necessary palaeographic and coding skills for the project.

Project 3 – Hegemonic “debate” practices on social media

Supervisors: Dr Emily Dawson, Dr Simon Lock – also working with Kylo Thomas & Ben Weil

Area: Science & Technology Studies; Sommmunication Studies; Social Media; Philosophy

Project description

We are working on a project exploring how social media platforms operate as spaces of violence & support hegemonic ideologies that seek to “debate” the ontological and epistemic facets of people’s lives, with a focus on recent twitter activity in the philosophy community about trans people as a key example.

You will generate, organise and index a database drawing on popular social media platforms to build a data set around how issues related to trans lives are enacted online. This is likely to be a twitter-based data set, but may also draw on instagram, facebook & or other platforms as time passes. You will also carry out an initial structured literature review on salient academic research, creating a bibliography to support the analysis of collected data.

Working as part of our team, we will develop a plan for building the data set (for instance, if on twitter, using Nvivo’s ncapture feature for particular accounts and hashtags) and carrying out some initial coding. We will also work together to discuss the parameters of the bibliographic work. For instance, we will decide on a series of key words that you will use to search key academic databases, checking abstracts & skimming the more relevant articles about how online “discussions” operate as technologies of dissent.

This is an area where remarkably little research has yet been carried out and it is also an area at the overlap of several different fields. As such trying to understand how social media operates as a ‘not-public’ public sphere, how platforms become the machinery of violence and how “debates” (a term which we find deeply problematic in these spaces) function as hegemonic ideologies may draw on many aspects of science & technology studies.

Skills required:

- Being well organised;
- Able to learn how to work with new research software tools;
- Ability to reference with accuracy;
- Ability to synthesis academic papers into their key components;
- Independent thinking;
- Problem solving;
- Excellent communication skills;
- Ability to work to a deadline.

Project 4 – Economics as news: a timeline and exhibit

Supervisor: Dr Tiago Mata

Area: History of the social sciences; Cultural studies; Political sociology; Sociology of science.

Project description

You will support the creation of a timeline of events on the history of economics as newsworthy. This is a resource for an upcoming conference and publication in 2022 asking the questions of when and why economics became news. To create this resource you will start by reading some published literature on economics as news and its landmarks and you will then seek to illustrate those moments with resources from online databases of print media. From this baseline you will with my help complement and disrupt the standard story with other events, publications, and actors. The purpose is to disrupt the standard story of economics media eminence as a result of the science's technical achievements and begin to explore more sociologically rich and critical stories.

The resource will exist in an online and offline format, trying to link to primary sources as much as possible and potentially curating the more visually compelling aspects of the record into a simple online exhibit. This resource will then be shared with conference participants and some version of it might see publication in an edited collection to appear in December 2022.

Skills required:

- Independence in searching for online resources and on online databases;
- Good record keeping;
- Knowledge of basic web design;
- Ability to sort and classify written material;
- Communication skills;
- Ability to work to a deadline.

For further details about the project and for a sketch of a work plan, please contact Tiago Mata, t.mata@ucl.ac.uk.

Project 5 – Historical Research at The Brunel Museum

Supervisors: Prof Joe Cain (STS), Katherine McAlpine (The Brunel Museum, Director).

Project description

The Brunel Museum tells the story of the world's first tunnel through soft ground under a navigable river, between Rotherhithe and Wapping. That tunnel was begun in 1825 under the direction of Marc Brunel. The museum is located in the "Engine House," a building associated with the tunnel's construction and operation.

<https://www.thebrunelmuseum.com>

This project involves historical research for The Brunel Museum to support their exhibits and visitor information projects. It specifically focuses on studying the layout and function of the Engine House. Erected approximately 180 years ago, nothing survives of the Engine House's original interior except for scars on its walls. Relatively little is known about the layout of equipment in the building or how this facility operated in support of the tunnelling project.

The purpose of this project is to investigate, document, and interpret the available evidence so museum volunteers can tell visitors a richer story of the tunnel: Did the Engine House actually hold the engine, pumps or something else? What was the original floorplan for equipment and how did this change over time? How did elements fit together? What other buildings were on site but now lost? Recent research using maps, photographs and drawings have highlighted a wealth of new information, while survey and limited excavation work have revealed architectural and archaeological features that deserve closer study.

During the project, the student will be able to rely on guidance from the museum's Director, Katherine McAlpine, and on research support from Professor Cain.

Skills required:

- Critical thinking;
- Problem solving;
- Independent research;
- Documentation and record keeping.

Project 6 - How have pandemic warnings worked in the past and what lessons can we identify?



Supervisor: Dr Carina Fearnley

Area: Warnings for Health Hazards, Science Communication, History of Outbreak and Disease Science, Forensic Analysis, Integrating governance at local, national, and international levels.

Project description

You will carry out a structured literature review and forensic analysis to address the question: *How have pandemic warnings worked in the past and what lessons can we identify?*

Adopting an interdisciplinary retrospective ('forensic') approach we will together develop a plan for investigation that addresses three key aspects:

1. Comparing differing epidemic and pandemic crises over the last century (e.g. Ebola and COVID-19)
2. Reviewing different country approaches (e.g. UK, New Zealand, Vietnam, and Sweden) to disease / COVID-19 warnings and preparedness, and
3. Review international collaborative efforts to establish warnings and preparedness actions (e.g. GOARN via the WHO).

This project will use data existing in institutional reports, academic papers, databases, books, and internet articles from differing perspectives including those from: academic, Government via policy, NGOs, and the business sector. These can be accessed via the internet, via a snowballing approach following up leads from key reports and sources, and this research may involve some documental and online archival research methods. We will have regular meetings and discussions to evaluate the findings and implications of the research.

Outputs and impact of the project: This information will be used to compile a journal publication around pandemic warning and alert approaches, that we would welcome you to be an author on. The resources you find, and a summary of your findings will be published on the STS Warning Research Centre website either as written materials or as a podcast.

Public Engagement: Opportunities to engage with experts and the public during the launch of the UCL Warning Research Centre WRC on both 23rd and 30th June at the Institute of Risk and Disaster Reduction (IRDR) 11th Annual Conference, and at STS respectively.

Skills required:

- Interdisciplinary skills, with an interest in engaging with a wide range of topics, sources, and research skills;
- Ability to reference with accuracy and use reference software, preferably Mendeley (or be willing to learn it);
- Ability to synthesis academic papers into their key components;
- Independent working, critiquing thinking and a curious mind;

- Problem solving;
- Well organised and able to work to deadlines systematically and rigorously;
- Excellent communication skills;

During the Internship, the student will have guidance from Dr Carina Fearnley and Prof Ilan Kelman (UCL Warning Research Centre, UCL Institute of Risk and Disaster Reduction, and UCL Institute for Global Health).

Useful articles indicating the work to be conducted:

Fearnley, C. J., & Dixon, D. (2020). Early warning systems for pandemics: Lessons learned from natural hazards. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. See: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212420920308980?via%3Dihub>

Fearnley, C.J. (2020, October 16). *UK government's tiered COVID-19 alert systems are all flawed, warns disaster expert*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/uk-governments-tiered-covid-19-alert-systems-are-all-flawed-warns-disaster-expert-148119>

Project 7 - UK Ethics Accelerator - rolling rapid review

Supervisors: Dr Cian O'Donovan, Dr Melanie Smallman

Area: Science policy, science communication, policy engagement; data and ai studies; Covid-19

Project description

You will research and write a rapid review on a topic relating to ethical decision making and data, policy and Covid-19. This might include issue areas such as vaccine passports, data and young people and transformations in health infrastructures. You will work with Cian O'Donovan and Melanie Smallman at the STS Department with input from James Wilson at the Philosophy Department. Tasks will include searching academic sources, media and policy websites, participating in online workshops. You will build up data and knowledge from these sources and others, and together we'll synthesise the important bits for research and policy decision makers and you will lead the write-up of a review, and other outputs to be decided.

The most exciting part of this project is that we have to react to a fast-moving policy and health landscape. That means you'll have to be up for keeping an eye on news and policy events.

This work is part of the UK Ethics Accelerator, a new nationally-funded project that aims to bring UK ethics research expertise to bear on the multiple, ongoing ethical challenges arising during the pandemic. Together with partners at Oxford, Bristol and Edinburgh, the team at UCL provides rapid evidence, guidance and critical analysis to decision-makers across science, medicine, government and public health. We also facilitate public stakeholder deliberation around key ethical challenges. This position is based at UCL STS where we are working specifically on issues of data ethics, governance and policy.

Skills required:

- Being well organised;
- Being able to synthesise academic papers and policy documents into their key components;
- Being able to talk about your work-in-progress;
- Being enthusiastic; you don't need to be an expert in ethics or policy, but you must be up for learning on the job;
- Being interested in UK and global news, policy and research about Covid-19;
- Being able to adapt research and writing plans quickly.

Project 8 – International survey on perceived coercion and wellbeing during Covid-19

Supervisors: Dr Veronica Ranieri, Prof Sarah Edwards

Area: Mental health; psychological wellbeing during COVID-19 pandemic

Project description

The COVID-19 Wellbeing Study: Perceived coercion and psychological wellbeing during the COVID-19 lockdown and pandemic

The psychological impact of restrictive measures has received notable attention in mental health research where, for instance, those who perceived their hospital admission as coercive tended to have poorer prognostic outcomes. It is, however, unclear as to how such restrictions were perceived by the general population and the extent to which these perceptions impacted on the general population's wellbeing. The aim of the study is to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of those who have been under lockdown in the UK, and other countries. Using a psychological framework, we will aim to understand the extent to which individuals perceived the lockdown as coercive, pressures and procedurally just, and examine how such perceptions impacted on individuals' psychological wellbeing, coping, and the possibility of trauma. The study employs an explanatory mixed-methods research methodology consisting of an online survey and online asynchronous virtual focus groups (online focus groups). The survey has now been completed. We are looking for someone to support our team in delivering and analysing the qualitative aspects of the study and supporting our international group of researchers.

Skills required:

Interest or experience in Qualitative interviewing, and assisting with running of online focus groups.

Project 9 - What Motivates Scientists to be Responsible?

Supervisor: Dr Stephen Hughes

Area: Responsible Innovation. Research Cultures. Sociology of Emotion. Theories of Care.

Project Description

STS is currently delivering a programme of teaching in responsible innovation (RI) to science PhDs across UCL. This has provided us with an opportunity to explore how researchers across a range of STEM fields feel about their ethical and social responsibilities. We want to know what scientists care about and why.

You will assist in the design of the study (figuring out the best way to get the data we need to answer the research questions) and in carrying out pilot research (testing to see what works and what we can improve). The study will consist of surveys and qualitative interviews with PhD students.

Your work will involve reading other studies to get a sense of how researchers have designed similar research, assisting in designing and testing online surveys (experimenting with questionnaire formats and contacting participants), and assisting in developing and conducting interviews (contacting participants and helping out before, during, and after the interviews themselves).

We will develop a clear plan for you to help structure your tasks - complete with concrete goals and objectives. You will also be given time to read up on some key relevant literature.

Regular communication will be important - both to update the supervisor on your progress and to ensure that you have the resources and support needed to complete your tasks.

Skills required:

- Organisation, planning, and time management;
- Communication;
- Collaboration;
- Creativity.