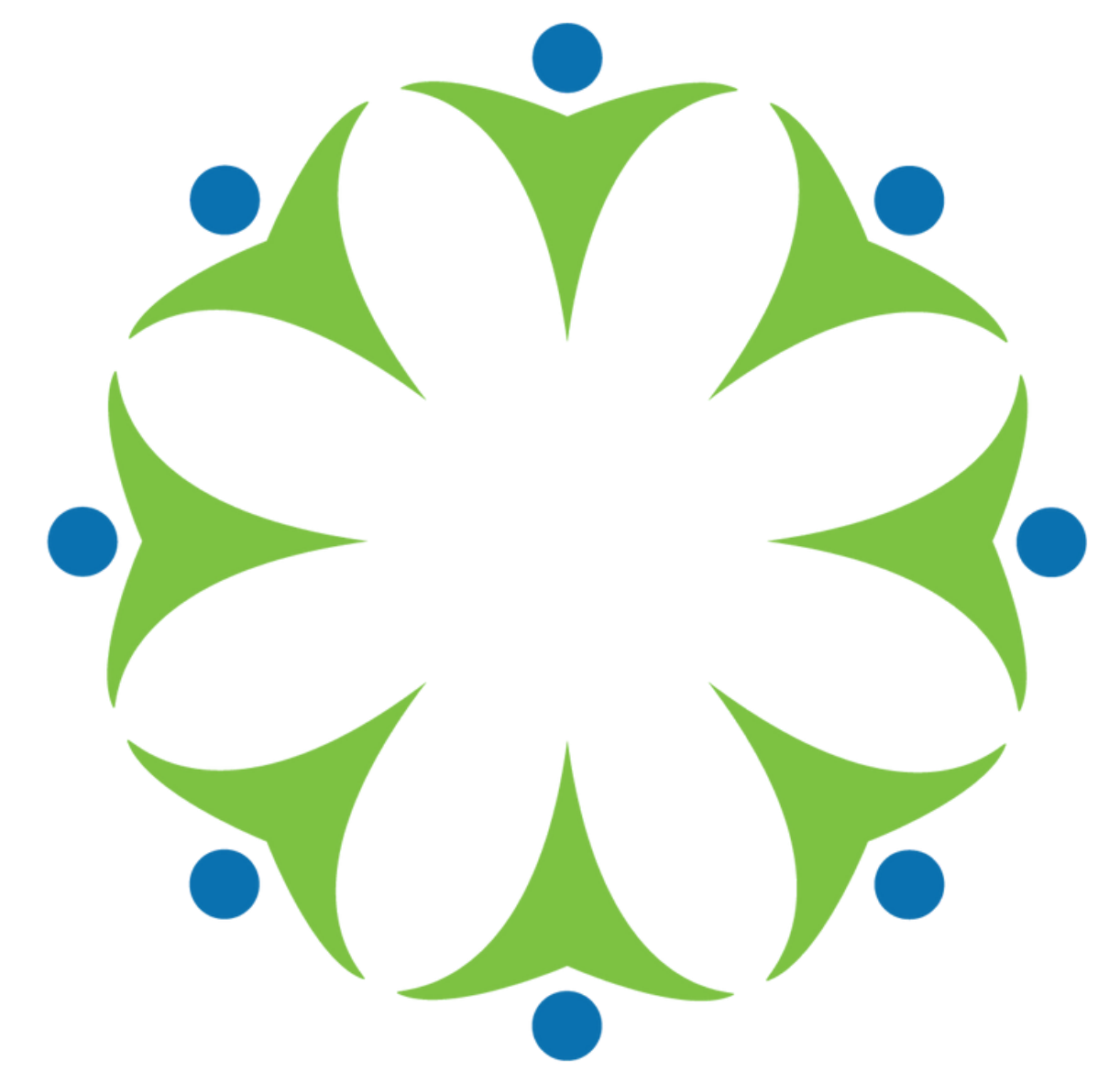


GenerationResearch: paid technical research opportunities for students



Summer studentships offer an exciting chance for undergraduates to experience research. Access to these studentships is important for continuing in higher education, graduate research/technician post applications, the graduate industrial job market, and health & medicine.



Often the route to achieving a studentship favours confident and outgoing students, but is incompatible for students with 'low social capital', or students with protected characteristics, thus resulting in access barriers.

GenerationResearch was created in 2021 and works to recruit talented undergraduate and masters' students to provide valuable research experiences via a platform that embeds equity and inclusivity in order to change research environment and drive sustainable diversity in science.



ACTION & APPROACH

We have implemented a number of changes:

- Attracted external funding from a range of stakeholders.
- Launched a website to house all our studentship projects.
- Designed a fairer, transparent recruitment process to incorporate widening participation criteria.

Projects are selected from PIs, post-docs, and experienced technical and research assistant staff. Applications are made via a form that collects widening participation criteria, plus student answers to three questions:

- Describe and give detail on an area of science that particularly interests you and explain why it is important.
- What do you hope to gain from this studentship experience?
- What skills and experience do you have that are relevant for this studentship?

Students are ranked for interview based 50:50 on widening participation score and the quality of written answers.

Interviews are 20 minutes long, online, and consist of a pre-prepared 5-minute presentation by the interviewee and 3 questions asked to all students. The final offer is the decision of the project supervisor, however the interview panel also includes a GenRes team member.

IMPACT

Since 2021 we have provided:

- over 60 summer studentships,
- 4 fully funded Masters by Research, and
- 1 industrial placement opportunity.

By working across disciplines (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Electronic Engineering, and medicine), and through a collaboration with external partners (BBSRC, Universities of Leeds and Sheffield, MRC-LMB, and industrial partners) we offer students at White Rose universities greater visibility in research practices at different institutions.

The scheme attracted 360 applications in 2023 from students across a diverse range of the student body and across the White Rose area (York, Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Hull). We invite stakeholders to contribute to a celebratory symposium at the end of the studentship period where students have the chance to present their findings and successes.

We also invite students and stakeholders to join a GenerationResearch LinkedIn community so that we can continue to follow the success of our students in their future endeavours.

CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNT

It is important to acknowledge that GenerationResearch is not a perfect scheme. We spend a lot of time in our team thinking about being aspirational in order to make this important scheme bigger and better. Our focus for 2024 will be to continue to generate funding from partners and stakeholders. Without this we cannot provide opportunity to students. In addition, we would like to encourage participation from more Yorkshire Universities, both as hosts of research and technical projects and in applications from their students. In the future we would like to see not only more funded summer studentship and Masters by Research opportunities, but also GenerationResearch PhD studentships, graduate technical apprenticeship positions, and to think about how the application process we have developed could be used for other academic positions.