**Scottish Marine Energy Research (ScotMER) programme**

**Fish and Fisheries Specialist Receptor Group (FFSRG)**

**ScotMER Internship Programme 2019**

**in conjunction with University of Aberdeen**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY**

# Overview

Marine Scotland Science invites postgraduate students (at Masters and PhD levels) in UK academic institutions to apply for a paid internship, duration between 3-6 months, to undertake a research project addressing knowledge gaps in the fields of offshore renewable energy, fish ecology and commercial fisheries, as identified by the ScotMER FFSRG Evidence Map.

Call opens: Monday 22nd July 2019

Call closes: 12:00 noon 13th September, 2019

# Background

Offshore renewable energy developments have an important role in helping to tackle climate change by contributing to the Scottish Government’s ambitious emissions reduction and energy strategy. However, these developments also have the potential to impact the marine environment. To improve understanding and assess the environmental and socio-economic implications of offshore renewable developments, and in line with the precautionary principle, Marine Scotland have established the Scottish Marine Energy Research (ScotMER) programme. ScotMER is an initiative that involves collaboration from industry, environmental NGOs, Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, and other interested stakeholders, to facilitate the sustainable development of offshore renewable energy in Scottish waters.

Marine Scotland have worked closely with stakeholders to map out the research gaps in scientific knowledge when assessing the environmental and socio-economic impacts of offshore renewable developments. Seven specialist groups were created, each focussing on particular impact receptors, including the Fish and Fisheries Specialist Receptor Group (FFSRG). FFSRG is made up of experts and stakeholders and has worked together to produce an “evidence map” that outlines and prioritises knowledge gaps in fish ecology and fisheries. More information can be found [here](https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/marineenergy/mre/research).

# Focus of the placements

The [ScotMER FFSRG Evidence Map](https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/marineenergy/mre/research/fish) provides the framework to guide the ScotMER Internship Programme 2019. The objectives of the Internship Programme are to:

* Initiate research projects directly addressing knowledge gaps as identified by the ScotMER FFSRG Evidence Map,
* Generate scientific evidence that informs offshore renewable energy policy and decision making,
* Initiate or expand collaborations between Marine Scotland and academic organisations leading to longer-term self-sustaining activities, and
* Enhance Marine Scotland’s capacity to engage in future funding calls as they become available.

# Scope and schedule of work

Postgraduate student applicants are invited to propose a project idea in the fields of offshore renewable energy, fish ecology and commercial fisheries, addressing one or more of the ScotMER evidence gaps. The proposal should outline the key research aims of the proposed internship, length, preferred start date, the tasks involved in the project, preliminary schedule, and key outputs. The wider impact of the project should also be explained.

Due to the limited budget available, projects are expected to be mostly desk-based. There can be scope for lab and/or field work for small pilots, if the proposal can demonstrate that agreement for access to necessary lab equipment, fieldwork tools, and/or databases has been reached with the relevant owners. We expect project ideas to only include either small research pilots (as proof of concept) or make use of the internship to develop a full funding proposal in collaboration with MSS for a later competitive funding application. Identifying a prospective funding call in your application that you may wish to target will be advantageous.

Expected outputs of each internship must include as a minimum:

* A **literature review** of scientific and grey literature on the proposed topic. The review will result in a report that will be published as part of MSS’s [Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science](https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Publications/stats/Science/SMFS) report series mid-way through the placement at the latest (e.g. by month 3), AND
* Either a **report** summarising findings from a pilot project or **draft research proposal** addressed to a funding body seeking additional resource for future research[[1]](#footnote-1), based on findings from the current project by the end of the internship (e.g. by month 6). AND
* An **oral presentation** of the project findings at a ScotMER Symposium preliminary scheduled for March 2020.

Scientific peer-reviewed publications led by the student are encouraged.

The placement duration is expected to be between 3 and 6 months, however proposals for a longer period will be considered, if justified. The working pattern for these placements is full-time (i.e. a single block of time with continuous engagement). However, alternative working patterns will be considered, if justified. Students are expected to be based in MSS offices in Aberdeen, but there is scope for students to work from their institution or third-party host organisation, subject to interim face-to-face meeting with MS staff.

# Selection criteria

Proposals will be assessed based on the following criteria:

**Impact (35% weighting)**

* Relevance to ScotMER FFSRG Evidence Gaps priorities and offshore renewable energy policy. Project ideas addressing evidence gaps of other receptor groups (e.g. Benthic, Physical processes, Diadromous fish, etc.) in addition to FFSRG will be scored favourably,
* Wider relevance to marine planning policy,
* Expected contribution towards the sustainable development of offshore renewable energy in Scottish waters – projects that target an area where no current research effort is dedicated or which will increase current knowledge or reduce current uncertainties will be scored favourably.

**Proposed Research (25% weighting)**

* Scientific merit of the proposal,
* Project complexity and deliverability within budget and timescales,

**Sustainability (20% weighting)**

* An assessment of the degree to which a project proposal is sustainable and extendable beyond the funding timescales associated with the present call and allows Marine Scotland to pursue further funding,
* Prospective funding call identified.

**Quality of application (20% weighting)**

* How well the approach and tasks have been clearly described,
* Project plan and schedule of work,
* Profile of applicant as supported by CV and cover letter.

A Scientific Evaluation and Monitoring Panel will be formed to objectively evaluate proposals The panel comprises representatives from Marine Scotland Science, Marine Scotland – Planning and Policy’s Marine and Offshore Renewable Energy Branch, Scottish Natural Heritage, Fisheries Innovation Scotland, as well as fishing and offshore renewable energy industry advisors.

# Eligibility and funding

We expect to fund between 4 and 10 postgraduate student placements as part of the ScotMER Internship Programme 2019, depending on the quality of proposals received. Successful students will be offered a student stipend of **£1,250.75 per month** (equivalent to the UK National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2019/20). Additional costs in relation to a proposed pilot (e.g. consumables) as well as travel and subsistence costs necessary to undertake the research project may also be requested as part of your application.

Applicants must be resident in the UK and be enrolled in a UK university for the duration of the proposed project. This opportunity is available to current *bona fide* postgraduate students at masters and doctoral levels. Subject to agreement from the host Higher Education Institutes (HEI), masters students may combine this placement with any other research commitments as part of their programme (e.g. MSc thesis). PhD students are expected to ask for a “no cost extension” to their doctoral studies for the duration of the placement, but alternative arrangements may be accepted if justified. Students must seek permission from their academic supervisor and that he/she is content with the internship programme specifications.

Note that successful applicants will be subject to pre-employment security and eligibility checks (incl. nationality requirements[[2]](#footnote-2)). We will, as part of the Scottish Governments pre-employment process, carry out the following enquiries into your identity, employment/academic history, nationality and immigration status, ‘unspent’ criminal record (Disclosure certificate), health and other matters, to ensure that you are qualified for the appointment. Further details on these checks are available to view [here](https://applications.work-for-scotland.org/files.axd?id=542227fd-6d81-4ef4-96d3-ee7aa4aef0af).

# Some considerations before you apply

1) When would be a good time within your PhD timeline to complete an internship? For example, you may have fieldwork commitments to work around, you may wish to do it between finishing your experimental work and before starting your write up proper. A previous intern said a break from his PhD before writing up meant he went back to it full of enthusiasm and ideas.

2) How long would you like to do an internship for and when would you like to start?

3) Are you willing/able to spend time away from home, working with staff at an organisation?

4) Have you discussed this opportunity with your Supervisor? If not - you should do so now and confirm that they are content for you to take on an internship. We may require written confirmation from your Supervisors and University that they are content for you to participate in an internship.

5) You also need to confirm whether an internship can form an integral part of your PhD. If it is not, or it is for a significant duration (i.e. 3 months or so) then you need to establish whether your University will allow you to defer the end date of your PhD without penalty (in time and funding).

# Project suggestions

Below, you will find some project suggestions that have either been of particular interest to Marine Scotland staff or external partners (incl. industry representatives), who have expressed an interest to host a potential internship.

Therefore, these project ideas might be good candidates for applicants to adopt, and develop further as part of their applications. Please note that these are example ideas and are neither intended to limit the scope of applications nor will be favoured against other high-quality applications. To ensure objectivity and transparency, members of the scientific evaluation and monitoring panel will be excluded from scoring applications that they or their organisation are directly affiliated. If you are interested in any of the following ideas, please get in touch with FFSRG Chair and Vice Chair who will put you in touch with the appropriate contacts (see at the bottom of this document).

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| **Project ideas** | **Potential links to external partners** |
| 1. Consistent & improved cumulative impact assessment methodology, accounting for impacts from various sectors (renewables, conservation, fisheries policy) on commercial fisheries (links to knowledge gap FF.04) | Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) and/or  National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO) |
| 1. Multi-use pilot between fisheries and floating wind farms at the Hywind Offshore Floating windfarm off the North East Coast of Scotland (links to knowledge gap FF.05) | Equinor |
| 1. Improvements to and representation of Scottish fisheries interest in consultation. Establish a social network to explore and increase consultation and outreach effectiveness (links to knowledge gap FF.03). | Marine Scotland Science |
| 1. Exploitation of SIFIDS & FISH1 inshore fisheries datasets to improve the representation of inshore fishing in sectoral marine planning for offshore wind (links to knowledge gap FF.01). | MASTS  Marine Scotland |
| 1. Environmental effects of decommissioning practices e.g. removal tools (explosion vs. mechanical removal), re-colonisation patterns of in situ infrastructure, trials to test physical ability for fishing to resume (links to knowledge gap FF.06). | SAMS  SFF |
| 1. Using on-board fishing plotter data (incl. UKFIM dataset) to improve representation of the use of marine space by commercial fisheries (links to knowledge gap FF.01). | SFF, Scottish White Fish Producers Association, East coast IFG |
| 1. Release of hatchery-reared juvenile lobsters at offshore wind farms – potential benefits to fisheries (links to knowledge gap FF.05 and FF.11). | Firth of Forth Lobster Hatchery |
| 1. Trials of deploying static gears (creels) targeting prawns within offshore windfarms and demonstrate commercial and environmental sustainability (links to knowledge gap FF.05) | Firth of Forth Lobster Hatchery |
| 1. Guidance on the interpretation of fisheries data as part of EIA process (links to knowledge gap FF.04). | NFFO |
| 1. Establish safety requirements for gear deployments within wind farms (links to knowledge gap FF.04). | NFFO |
| 1. Further work on fisheries displacement modelling from offshore wind farms (links to knowledge gap FF.02). | Marine Scotland Science |

# Key dates

July 2019 – Call opens, and applications are invited.

Aug 2019 – Call closes - deadline for applications.

Sept 2019 – Sifting and scoring of applications. Announcement of successful projects.

Sept 2019 – Earliest start date for projects

Feb 2020 – Latest end date for projects

Mar 2020 – Dissemination of findings at a ScotMER Symposium

# Application process

Students interested in the opportunity should share a short project proposal (following the attached application form and adhering to word limits), a 2-page CV and a 1-page cover letter explaining why they are interested in this opportunity. Prospective applicants are requested to consider all of the information and material carefully before putting forward a proposal. Please note that incomplete applications will not be considered. The application process will be single-stage. Interested parties have three weeks from the announcement of the call to submit an application.

Following evaluation of proposals, successful applicants will be notified of their success and will be invited to accept the offer and confirm their start date. Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified. Feedback on the applications and the score it received will be available on request.

Please note that administration of the application and review process, reporting, and allocation of funding to successful applicants is coordinated by University of Aberdeen. All applications will be received, collated, and send out to ScotMER panel for review.

Application should be submitted via email to the following email address by the closing date Thursday 29th August 2019 by 12 noon, [sbsinternships@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:sbsinternships@abdn.ac.uk)

**For any enquiries or further information, please contact:**

Dr. Janelle Braithwaite (ScotMER Coordinator) – [Janelle.Braithwaite@gov.scot](mailto:Janelle.Braithwaite@gov.scot)

Kirsty Wright – [Kirsty.Wright@gov.scot](mailto:Kirsty.Wright@gov.scot)

Dr. Andronikos Kafas (FFSRG Chair) – [Andronikos.Kafas@gov.scot](mailto:Andronikos.Kafas@gov.scot)

1. Example proposal form and requirements for standard grants can be found within [NERC research grants & fellowships handbook](https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/application/howtoapply/forms/grantshandbook/). Please note that this is only an example and the proposal template to be used will be subject to the funding body addressed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. You can apply for any job in the Scottish Government as long as you are a UK national or have dual nationality with one part being British. In addition, Scottish Government posts are open to Commonwealth citizens and nationals of any of the member states of the European Economic Area (EEA). Further information about civil service nationality requirements is available on the [Civil Service Website](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/recruitment/background). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)