



EASTBIO Management Group message on the impact of the cost of living crisis

The EASTBIO DTP Management Group expresses its strong support for our funded students in the face of the rapidly rising costs of living. We acknowledge that the cost-of-living crisis is creating a challenging environment for students and members of staff across our institutions and the DTP. We are also keenly aware of how the cost-of-living crisis affects the vulnerable amongst us.

All EASTBIO partner institutions take the duty of care of students very seriously. Duty of care is not only reflected by our EASTBIO structure and organisation (support and representation of all partners through the Management Group), but is also evident by the resources available to support PGRs at our institutions. All EASTBIO students are supported locally by their host institutions and the representatives of EASTBIO partner institutions who act as members of the Management Group.

Importantly and in line with our concerns about the cost of living, we have and continue to use all available channels to influence UKRI BBSRC policy. Through our recently completed Mid-Term Review (July 2022), the EMG has advocated with UKRI BBSRC to ensure that student issues receive the needed attention. As part of this review, we have also offered EASTBIO students the opportunity to take part and interact with our funder (interview with UKRI BBSRC reps on the 24 June 2022). With a projected 12% inflation for 2022/23, we fully agree that raising stipend levels, in line with inflation, is the principal way forward.

As a grant holder, EASTBIO spending must conform to UKRI BBSRC rules and the grant agreement. Our agreement spells out the mechanism by which UKRI BBSRC funding is matched by the partner institutions along with EASTBIO (training and admin support) obligations. Consequently, the EASTBIO DTP cannot unilaterally decide on the use of studentship funds.

We think it is crucial that a national decision will enable our students to carry out their research. In its absence and following an announcement by BBSRC of the outcome of our Mid-Term Review in the autumn of 2022, the EMG will explore how EASTBIO can offer the support our students need.

The EMG will continue discussing options following the UKRI decision on stipend level increases. We encourage EASTBIO students and their representatives to continue to engage with us in a productive and collaborative discussion to address current concerns.

In the meantime, if you are experiencing financial difficulties or any other issues as a result of the cost of living crisis, please email the EASTBIO team or your local EASTBIO academic representative (for details, see at <http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/eastbio-contacts>); they can advise confidentially on support available to you locally.

2 September 2022