

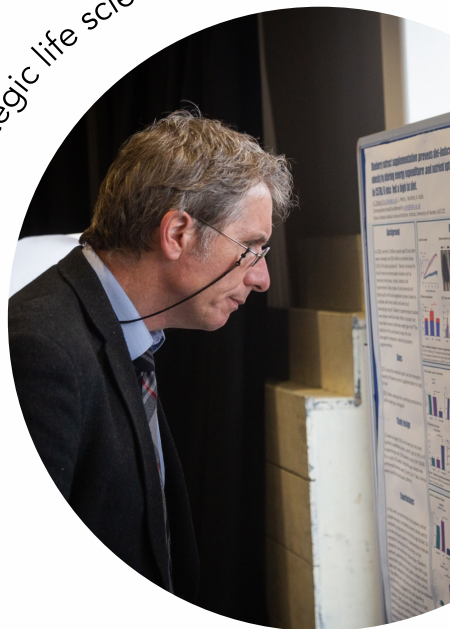
UKRI BBSRC EastBio



Doctoral Training Programme



developing academic and transferable skills



contributing to strategic life sciences research

building a positive research culture



Your EastBio partners



- academic partners
- associate partners

Welcome to EastBio

EastBio is the East of Scotland Bioscience Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). It was established in 2012 with funding from the UKRI Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), which is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

Our partnership comprises the institutions along the East coast of Scotland, a key region in the UK for life sciences in terms of both academic excellence and industrial support and investment.

The primary aim of EastBio is to deliver world-class interdisciplinary training to bioscience PhD students and to build vibrant interactive student cohorts. In addition to providing enhanced training to our students, the partnership offers outstanding opportunities for collaborative research between academic and industrial shareholders, access to expertise and research facilities across the institutions of the East of Scotland.

Website

[www.ed.ac.uk/
biology/eastbio](http://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio)

Email

[enquiries@
eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk)

Twitter

x.com/EastbioDTP

LinkedIn

[www.linkedin.com/
company/eastbio](http://www.linkedin.com/company/eastbio)

**Professor Gerben
van Ooijen**

on behalf of the
EastBio Academic
Management Group

Welcome to EastBio

Welcome to the EastBio Doctoral Training Partnership community! We look forward to meeting you and your supervisors as we welcome you at our Induction and Training Day in Stirling, on the 9th and 10th of October 2024.

EastBio is a partnership of five universities - Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Stirling and St Andrews - plus the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (IBioIC), Moredun Research Institute, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), the James Hutton Institute and associate partners Cool Farm Alliance and SULSA. Each of you will be registered in a host school or department within your university. Although you will follow the local training and assessment programme of your host institution, you are an EastBio PhD student, funded by UKRI BBSRC. As such, you will receive additional training, as will be introduced and as listed in this Handbook under 'EastBio Training Programme'. You will also be expected to undertake a Professional Internship for PhD Students (PIPS), which will provide you with an opportunity to learn valuable professional skills in the workplace.

You have beaten off stiff competition to receive one of our prestigious studentships and are at the start of an exciting four-year journey through your PhD. We hope that the EastBio team and resources such as this Handbook, our Induction Day and the EastBio website will help you familiarise yourselves with the aims of the partnership and our training programme. We expect that throughout your PhD each of you will take a proactive approach to your own training and development with the support of your supervisors and EastBio. You will be asked to complete and update your 'Professional Development Record' and we will monitor this to help ensure that you complete your PhD within four years and graduate with a set of valuable skills that will enable you to compete successfully with the best in the world in your chosen career.

We have been working hard to respond to feedback from our



annual student and supervisor survey to ensure that our training programme remains relevant, and we can best support you through your PhD.

As a new PhD student, you will be establishing yourselves in an exciting, vibrant research environment - meeting lots of new people, possibly finding your way around in a new city, country or culture and being bombarded with information on just about everything. If any of us can assist you with settling in, please don't hesitate to contact us! You can find information on the EastBio management structure and contacts at the end of this Handbook and on our website, below. Having said that, you will be meeting most of us – as well as the team and your supervisor - at the Induction Day!

www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/EastBio-contacts

I encourage you to make the most of the two-day Induction and the ample opportunity it provides for informal interactions with supervisors, the EastBio Management and team, as well as former students and second-year student reps.

Students

Our students have core funding from UKRI BBSRC, coupled with additional funding from each of the EastBio partner institutions.

Research

The EastBio PhD projects are designed to meet strategic UKRI BBSRC research priorities (<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/research/>) in the following areas:

Our first cohort was
52 students

2020

01

Bioscience for renewable resources and Clean Growth

Our second cohort was
54 students

2021

02

Bioscience for Sustainable Agriculture and Food – Crops and Soil

Our third cohort was
61 students

2022

03

Bioscience for an integrated understanding of Health

Our fourth cohort was
58 students

2023

04

Bioscience for Sustainable Agriculture and Food – Terrestrial and Aquatic Animals

We welcome our
thirteenth cohort of
63 students

2024

05

Understanding the Rules of Life

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EastBio Training Programme

The EastBio Training and Development Programme is aligned with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and aims to support your researcher, professional and personal development throughout the four years of your funded PhD. During your PhD, we expect that all our students will develop the characteristics of a highly skilled and employable bioscience graduate and go on to work and lead in our complex, diverse world.

The core programme in Years 1 and 2 is designed to help you develop these crucial skills. To be successful in your future career you will also be developing a range of personal skills, such as effective communication, initiative, project management skills and resilience. The EastBio transferable skills programme from Year 1 to 4, together with the student-led thematic sessions and the EastBio Annual Symposia, which student volunteers help to organise, aim to build your personal skills, your confidence and independence.

Finally, the EastBio Professional Internships for PhD students (PIPS) provide you with the unique opportunity to try something different from your research in the lab. The invaluable experience of working in a non-academic environment will make the transition into your bioscience career much easier.

The EastBio training programme incorporates the above elements, including the CASE placements (for students doing Collaborative projects with an industrial partner), and is structured around each year of the doctoral study.





We aim for our training to be integrated with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles and conform to UKRI BBSRC strategic priorities. We deliver our programme with a degree of flexibility so as to be supporting of students with additional requirements or faced with circumstances that affect the way you engage with the programme. If you have specific requirements arising out of a disability, additional caring responsibilities, a hardship, or a plan of reasonable adjustments in place, please let us know early. This will allow us to help you explore alternative options and agree on an adjusted training plan with your supervisor.

As well as the information in this Handbook and the Placements Student Guide, you should keep an eye on your mailbox and the EastBio website. We circulate a monthly Newsletter highlighting training to come, as well as training updates, mental health news and other relevant developments.



www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/training

Programme Structure

The EastBio training programme is a modular programme with mandatory and optional elements. This allows each student to acquire core competences and, also, to dynamically manage your own development according to ongoing reflection on your training needs, which naturally evolve during the course of your doctoral study. We expect that you will continue to develop your ability to think about your needs and training priorities keeping your broad career aspirations and values in sharp focus across your PhD journey.

We aim for 50% of our training to run in-person in order to build a strong cohort and we hope that the interactions that you will have with your fellow EastBio students will extend beyond your PhD. We will run 50% of the training remotely, in line with the student feedback we have received and in recognition of increased challenges arising from the cost-of-living crisis, caring responsibilities, disability, and parallel research commitments. We also provide the option of formally recognising external research training you may do in lieu of EastBio training, as will be explained below.

As outlined in fig. 1, in Years 1 and 2 you are expected to attend a number of (face-to-face and online) EastBio training events and activities, some mandatory for your cohort, some optional. As you are funded by UKRI BBSRC, you are required to complete the EastBio training. You will get training points for each session you will attend - usually 10 points per day-long training – and achieve **200 training points in total by the end of your second year of PhD study**. We recommend that you should aim to collect a minimum of **120 training points by the end of your first year** but this is a guide only. Although there are specific mandatory EastBio events in Year 3 and 4, these carry no credit. Figure 2 gives an overview.

Year 1 • minimum of 120 points

Mandatory Training and Events

- Induction
- Symposium
- Placements Q&A
- 2x Set 1 Masterclasses
- 4x Thematic meetings
- 2x Transferable skills
- Training via host institution
- Public engagement

Optional Training

- Set 2 Masterclasses
- Set 3 Masterclasses
- External training options



Submit your Professional Development Record with a minimum of 120 training points to progress to Year 2

Year 2 • minimum of 200 points

- Symposium
- 1x Thematic meeting
- Science Communication
- Public Engagement

- Set 2 Masterclasses
- Set 3 Masterclasses
- Advanced bioscience training
- External training options



Submit your Professional Development Record with a minimum of 200 training points to progress to Year 3

Year 3 • completion of placement

- PIPS or CASE placement
- Public Engagement
- Making the Most of Your Final Year

- Symposium
- External training options



Complete PIPS or CASE placement to progress to year 4

Year 4

- Public Engagement

- Symposium
- External training options

Year 1 • minimum of 120 points

Mandatory with points

10	Induction
10	Symposium
10	Placements Q+A
10 (x2)	Set 1 Masterclasses
10 (x4)	Thematic Meetings
10	Enterprise and Industry Skills <i>(some training may be open to CASE students only)</i>
10	Resilient Researcher
0	Public Engagement <i>(2 days each year)</i>
0	MANTRA
0	Research Integrity <i>(via host institution)</i>
0	Presentation Skills <i>(via host institution)</i>

Optional Training with points

10 each	Set 2 Masterclasses
10 each	Set 3 Masterclasses
20	L2D Course
10	Coding Club
10	Where do you draw the line?
40 max	External/local institution training and development <i>(by application – max 40 points across Year 1 and Year 2)</i>
10	Student Rep engagement
0	Other non-EastBio Training

Year 2 • minimum of 200 points

Mandatory with points

10	Symposium
10	Science Communication
10	Thematic Meeting
10	Enterprise and Industry Skills <i>(some training may be open to CASE students only)</i>
0	PIPS or CASE Placement
0	Public Engagement <i>(2 days each year)</i>

Optional Training with points

10 each	Set 2 Masterclasses
10 each	Set 3 Masterclasses
10 each	Advanced Bioscience Training
40 max	External/local institution training and development <i>(by application – max 40 points across Year 1 and Year 2)</i>
0	Other non-EastBio Training

Year 3 • completion of placement

Mandatory with points

- 0 PIPS or CASE Placement
- 0 Public Engagement (2 days each year)
- 0 Making the Most of your Final Year

Optional Training with points

- 0 Other non-EastBio Training
- 0 Symposium

Year 4

Mandatory with points

- 0 Public Engagement (2 days each year)

Optional Training with points

- 0 Making the Most of Your Final Year
- 0 Symposium

Note that student reps collect a bonus of 20 training points in their two years of service, in recognition of their time commitment and contributions to the programme.

Figure 2 EastBio Training Points



Foundation Masterclasses

These training sessions are developed as primers to provide the groundwork in bioscience methods and theory to enable students to identify further training relevant to your own needs. The summaries provide clear description of objectives encouraging students to consider advancing their technical skills and understanding of subject and method. Although these courses are offered to students on their first and second year and contribute to training points, they are also open to further-year students if relevant to their projects.

Set 1 Masterclasses

are mandatory for all year 1 students and are worth 10 points each. They focus on core quantitative and computational skills.

These are:

- Statistics and Experimental Design Workshop
- Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for bio-scientists

Set 2 Masterclasses

are optional for year 1 and year 2 students and are worth 10 points each. They focus on interdisciplinary working. Note that we will not run sessions with less than 6 registrations.

Set 3 Masterclasses

are optional for year 1 and year 2 students and are worth 10 points each. They focus on foundation bioscience training and primers in transformative technologies and methods.

Enterprise and Industry Skills

This component supports professional development related to industry and business such as translational, commercial, entrepreneurial and leadership skills.

Students on Collaborative studentships are required to take at least one of the training options, including the 3-day Mini MBA that we introduced in collaboration with IBioIC in 2023/24 programme. Training provided under this strand has been developed in collaboration with partners IBioIC, SULSA, Cool Farm Alliance, and the UoE Edinburgh Innovations. For details, please go to:

www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/training/enterprise-and-industry-skills

Depending on capacity, we will open this training to students on standard studentships.

Learn to Discover (L2D) Course

This external course is delivered by academics based at the University College London and Birkbeck College London. The course provides training in Data Science & Machine Learning for Health, Disease and Bioscience.

In 2024, EastBio will award approximately 12 places on the L2D course, each worth £1,000. We will invite applications from first-year students before the Induction to comply with the provider's deadline of 30th of September. More information about L2D is to be found here:

<https://learntodiscover.ai/>

Due to the considerable investment, students awarded a place must be fully committed to completing the course within the one-year deadline, by the end of September 2025 or any deadlines set by the L2D team. Upon completion, students will receive 20 training points.

Transferable Skills

The acquisition and development of transferable skills that are related to employment is an important part of your postgraduate training.

These training sessions are **mandatory** unless otherwise stated and are allocated per year of study.

Year 1

- Presentation skills via host institution
- Research Integrity via host institution
- Resilient Researcher
(10 points)
- Enterprise and/or Industry Skills
(10 points for CASE students)
- MANTRA - a free, online non-assessed course developed by the University of Edinburgh, with guidelines to help you critically understand how to manage the digital data you collect throughout your research
(0 points)

<https://mantra.ed.ac.uk/>



Year 2

- Science Communication with Impact
(10 points)



Year 3

- Making the Most of Your Final Year
(0 points)



Year 4

- Making the Most of Your Final Year
(0 points)

Advanced Bioscience skills

In the second year, students are expected to further develop core bioscience skills by taking optional advanced training courses suiting your individual research project requirements.

Most courses in advanced core bioscience and advanced technology skills are available locally at one or more of our partner institutions. As an EastBio student you have access to such courses. Examples of such options can be found at:

www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/training/advanced-bioscience-training

Second year students can receive 10 training points per course, which should be recorded in your Professional Development Record.

Public Engagement

BBSRC expects all PhD students to carry out a minimum of two days of public engagement activity per year throughout your studies. The requirement takes you out of the lab and engages your social curiosity and investment alike. We ask you to record your activities on your Training Development Record.

We encourage you to explore opportunities close to your own interests, and will also advertise opportunities via our Newsletter. Examples of activities students completed in the past include:

- Training/work as a STEM ambassador
- Grassroot teaching
- Engagement with local festivals of science
- Engagement with community projects at a local or regional level
- Participatory research
- Organisation of local mental health/wellbeing initiatives
- Meet-the-scientist events
- Science mentor schemes for schools/colleges
- Conservation activities, etc.
- Advocacy work

External training



First and second-year EastBio students may apply to receive training points for training and development opportunities external to the programme, either delivered by the local institution or by an external provider, that are not currently accounted for in the training programme.

External opportunities can fulfil a maximum of 20% of the total training point requirements, or 40 points out of the total 200 expected by the end of your second year of study. Students in their third year are eligible to apply if they have outstanding training to complete. Please complete the EastBio form for each training you wish to apply for points for:

<https://forms.office.com/e/W8LXbXsBsf>

Eligible training must be at least one-day long and fulfil at least one of the stated criteria. To apply, students should:

- a. Complete the online form
- b. Provide evidence of the training by emailing bioenq@exseed.ed.ac.uk.

Evidence can include:

certificate of completion, 'thank you for attending' email, screenshot of online attendance, confirmation of attendance from trainer/supervisor. We will not consider applications that do not provide adequate details or a description of benefits.

Examples of eligible training include:

scientific methods, advanced training, teaching or demonstrating work undertaken, non-academic work towards gaining a specific skill or professional experience.

After a review of your application form, we will contact you to confirm the training points approved (or seek clarifications, as necessary) and we will update your Training Development Record accordingly.

Planning Your Training

We recognise that each researcher has a set of unique training needs. The following steps may be considered as you plan your training this year:

01 Reflect on your current skills to identify your strengths and areas where you feel there are gaps. For this purpose, use the **Researcher Development Framework**:

www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework

02 Speak to your supervisor about your training needs and make a plan using the **PhD Professional Development Record** template. Aim to revisit your plans regularly to keep these relevant and dynamic. Add a brief statement about the impacts of your work – research and more widely – and update the statement.

03 Speak to other researchers – EastBio students, student reps or lab members – to share and seek further advice, resources, and ideas about training.

04 Check the EastBio training programme and make sure that you do not miss any mandatory events.

05 When picking from options, review what is available and, also, check what your own institution and wider bioscience community provides in terms of training and support.

06 If you notice overlaps between EastBio and local training, please contact us for advice and options; you have the option of doing external training for points.

07 Sign up to each individual training online **through the Eventbrite links on our website**. Here you can also find the summaries of each training.

08 Keep track of the training you have attended using the **PhD Professional Development Record**, to be submitted at the end of your first and second year. Make sure you save a copy for your files and for reference.

Professional Development Record

To make the most of the training offered by EastBio partner institutions and by external organisations, we require our students to keep a Professional Development Record.

In this document, you should record any training and development activities you have carried out. We ask that you keep updating it with specific details as you proceed through your first and second year. You can submit your Professional Development Record via this form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/nSXPPb4i88>

Delayed submission of your Professional Development Record may result in late or cancelled stipend payments.

Your Professional Development Record helps self-reflection on your personal and professional skills development by:

- tracking evidence of your professional development which you can use to review, evaluate and plan for your career progress
- allowing you to reflect dynamically on the impacts of your work and values as they develop over the course of your PhD

It also:

- allows your local Thesis Committee to assess your progress at the end of each year of your PhD and into further years
- helps the EastBio team to:
 - monitor your total training credit points over your first two years on the programme
 - collect qualitative data needed to fulfil our reporting obligations to BBSRC

How to Register for Training

All training events will be published on our website at:

www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/training/training-overview

Sign up by:

31st October



Cancellation Policy

We are accountable for our programme delivery to our funder and partners, and monitor its impact based on factors such as attendance, cohort-building, student engagement and benefits.

We provide a degree of flexibility acknowledging the effect on students of multiple stressors and clashing work commitments. We will make sure that students who cannot attend mandatory training at default times will be offered alternative options, or the opportunity to attend at a later date.

If you have any concerns about training you are expected to do or if you need to cancel your registration, please do as soon as possible and no later than 2 weeks in advance (unless for an emergency). However, if you cancel too close to the training or without emailing us the reason, EastBio will seek to retrieve expenditure (venue hire, external trainer fees, facility use fees, training licences, etc.).

After notification, EastBio will deduct an amount proportional to the event's real cost from student RTSG in the following cases:

- No-show
- Cancellation between 1 week and 1 day before the event takes place (including Eventbrite cancellation)
- Notification of cancellation without a legitimate reason

The financial penalty depends on the specific event planned but will range between £100/day to £300 for 2-day residential events (e.g. symposia).

How to sign-up:

You should sign up for each training that you wish to attend via the link to Eventbrite on the website by the 31st of October 2024 so that we can confirm numbers with our training leads.

Managing EventBrite:

You can use Eventbrite to manage your training sign-ups by registering for new training, or cancelling existing registration in line with the cancellation policy below. Please use your preferred institutional email address when registering through Eventbrite as we will use this to send reminder emails and important information pertaining to the training.

Feedback

Our current programme is shaped by a number of shared priorities:

- Strategic UKRI BBSRC requirements
(research priorities, focus on computational methods, interdisciplinarity, industry- and business-related skills)
- EastBio contractual commitments and steering by the EastBio Academic Management Group and Advisory Board
(cohort-building, supervisory engagement, horizon scanning)
- Feedback from current students, your student reps, supervisors and industrial partners

EastBio aims to respond to the needs that you, your supervisors and your potential future employers may identify.

Therefore, we seek feedback on each individual training and event we run centrally and, also, an Annual Programme Survey at the end of the year. You can see the changes we have made to the programme as a result of your feedback at:

www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/you-said-we-did

You can also communicate your views of the programme by contacting your student rep(s), the EastBio Support Officer, or a member of one of the EastBio subcommittees; for details see:

www.eastscotbioldtp.ac.uk/EastBio-dtp-committees

You may also want to join the Training and Development or Industry Engagement subcommittees, whose task is to discuss the progress and delivery of the programme, any gaps, shifting priorities, issues raised, etc., and make recommendations for improvement.

EastBio Training Calendar

Please note that these dates and locations are subject to change, additional training may be added and advertised training may be swapped for a suitable alternative depending on facilitator availability.

For an updated version of the training calendar, please go to the EastBio website. Here you can also register for each training.

Event Date and Location	Event Type and Points	Event Title and Lead/s
9-Oct-2024 Stirling	Event 10 points	Induction EastBio Team
10-Oct-24 Stirling	Set 1 Masterclass 10 points	Statistical Modelling Using R Prof Steven Hubbard
24-Oct-24 Online	Set 1 Masterclass 10 points	Generative AI & The Researcher Dr Jo Young
11-Nov-24 Online	Transferable Skills 10 points	Where Do You Draw The Line Richard Boardman
15-Nov-24 Online	Transferable Skills 10 points	Where Do You Draw The Line Richard Boardman
2-Dec-24 Online	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Good Enough Practices in Research Computing Dr Edward Wallace
4-Dec-24 Dundee	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Advanced Imaging Dr Graeme Ball, Dr Marcus Mischoff, Dr Petre Walczysko, Dr Paul Appleton, Jean-Marie Burel
10-Dec-24 Edinburgh	Set 2 Masterclass 10 points	Primer for Mathematical Modelling Dr Lucy Martin
13-Jan-25 Online	Transferable Skills 10 points	Where Do You Draw The Line Richard Boardman
17-Jan-25 Online	Transferable Skills 10 points	Where Do You Draw The Line Richard Boardman
21-Jan-25 Online	Set 1 Masterclass 10 points	Generative AI & The Researcher Dr Jo Young
3-Feb-25 Online	Mandatory Training 10 points	Placements Q&A EastBio Team
17+21-Feb-25 Online	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Systematic Review and Mapping Methods Dr Neal Haddaway
27-Feb-25 Online	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Cool Farm Tool Michaela Aschbacher
3-March-25 Online	Transferable Training (Y2) 10 points	Science Communication Prof Jonathan Pettit
10-March-25 Dundee	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Science Communication Additional Prof Jonathan Pettit
11-March-25 Edinburgh	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Primer for Synthetic Biology Dr Giovanni Stracquadanio, Dr Rennos Fragkoudis, Dr Peter Vegh
25-March-25 Aberdeen	Set 2 Masterclass 10 points	Introduction to Chemistry for Biologists Dr Sergio Dall'Angelo, Dr Wael Houssen

Event Date and Location	Event Type and Points	Event Title and Lead/s
10-Apr-25 Online	Transferable Skills 10 points	The Resilient Researcher Skillfluence
22-Apr-25 Online	Transferable Skills 10 points	The Resilient Researcher Skillfluence
28-Apr-25 Dundee	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Mapping and Modelling Your Biological Pathway Prof Andrew Millar
6-May-25 Edinburgh	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Genomic Approaches Edinburgh Genomics
15-May-25 Online	Transferable Skills (Y3/4) 0 points	Making the Most of Your Final Year Dr Jo Young
21-May-25 MoreDun Research Institute	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Proteomics and Mass Spectrometry Kevin McLean
3+4-June-25 Edinburgh	Event 10 points	EastBio Impact Symposium EastBio Team
tbc tbc	Set 3 Masterclass 10 points	Primer for Advanced Omics Approaches tbc
tbc tbc	Set 3 Masterclasses 10 points	Structural Biology and Crystallography tbc
Asynchronous Various	Additional Training 20 points	Learn to Discover L2D
Asynchronous Online	Advanced Bioscience Skills 10 points	Multiple Courses Various
Asynchronous Online	Additional Training 10 points	Coding Club Data Lab
Asynchronous Online	Mandatory Training 0 points	MANTRA University of Edinburgh
Asynchronous Via host institution	Mandatory Training 0 points	Presentation Skills Via host institution
Asynchronous Via host institution	Mandatory Training 0 points	Research Integrity Via host institution
Asynchronous 2 days per year	Mandatory Training 0 points	Public Engagement Various

Thematic meetings

The thematic group you will join at the Induction fits within one of the five key research themes that are of strategic importance to UKRI BBSRC:

- Bioscience for renewable resources and clean growth
- Bioscience for sustainable agriculture and food – Crops and soil
- Bioscience for an integrated understanding of health
- Bioscience for sustainable agriculture and food – Terrestrial and aquatic animals (*this encompasses Livestock Production Biology, and Health and aquaculture*)
- Understanding the rules of life

Prior to the Induction, we will confirm the thematic group you belong to so as to ensure robust group sizes for good interactions. You should let us know if you think that your training needs are best served within a different group than the one you are assigned to in October.

Thematic meetings are mandatory, and assist with cohort-building throughout the first year of PhD. These meetings are student-led and should take place at different partner institutions 4 times over the course of the year, ideally in alternate months – December, February, April, June. The final thematic meeting may take place either as part of, or following the EastBio symposium in early June. This may be a joint meeting across groups if there is interest in a topic such as industry-collaboration, science communication or big data in life sciences.

You are encouraged to check the plans of other groups, which is easily done via our monthly Newsletter.

We will provide you with details of all members in your group (names and contact emails of students and supervisors, project titles and affiliation) so that you can start planning and make decisions as a group straight away; remember to involve second-year students in your planning.

As you start shaping your meeting, with input and guidance from PhD supervisors, note what these meetings aim to achieve:

- Introduce challenges, questions and tools that are central or emergent in your theme-specific research area
- Help you develop your critical and analytical reading skills
- Help you develop your understanding and capacity in a given area that is considered key in the field, whether methodology, technology or outreach
- Meet other EastBio students and supervisors working in complementary research areas, to share expertise and establish forward-looking collaborations
- Network and get some support and ideas from other students and academics in your group, from other PhD programmes, and from the network of guest speakers you will be engaging with

EastBio is not prescriptive about the format of the meetings and we encourage you to consider a variety of ways to deliver these in line with the above aims, for instance:

- Critical evaluation of seminal papers
- Group and panel discussions on key questions for the area (for example, *What are the biggest unresolved challenges? What is around the corner in terms of research and transformative technology? Which research models are more adequate for a particular question? etc.*)
- Talks from invited speakers or your PhD supervisors, industrial representatives, etc.
- Review of applied research
- Visits to industry facilities or sites

Please consider engaging students on other doctoral training programmes to explore additional research themes in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, 'Omics' Technologies as these can help you gain a better understanding of interdisciplinary approaches. Depending on capacity, you may be able to open your meeting to non-EastBio researchers (check with the EastBio Support Officer first).

These could include programmes such as:

UKRI Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (IBioIC) CDT

www.ibioic.com/

The NERC-funded Earth, Ecology and Environment Doctoral Training Partnership (E4 DTP)

www.ed.ac.uk/e4-dtp

UKRI NERC-funded IAPETUS2 DTP (University of Stirling)

www.iapetus2.ac.uk/about/

UKRI CDT in Biomedical AI programme (University of Edinburgh)

web.inf.ed.ac.uk/cdt/biomedical-ai

BARIToNE Collaborative Training Partnership

www.dundee.ac.uk/phds/funding/baritone-collaborative-training-partnership

EPSRC CDT in Data Science

datascience.inf.ed.ac.uk



**Welcome PhD Programme in
Integrative Cell Mechanisms**

*[www.ed.ac.uk/biology/wcb/study-with-us/
integrative-cell-mechanisms](http://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/wcb/study-with-us/integrative-cell-mechanisms)*

**NERC-funded QUADRAT DTP
(Queen's University Belfast &
Aberdeen Doctoral Research and Training)**

www.abdn.ac.uk/sbs/research/quadrat/index.php

The Graduate Experience I

The EastBio journey - What do you want?

My EastBio PhD journey began in 2014, looking into an ancient bacterial enzyme complex able to produce hydrogen from formate. Initially, focus was on a better understood system from the bacterial workhorse *Escherichia coli*. This enzyme was beginning to be applied to real-world issues around biofuels and carbon fixation to fight climate change. However, a larger enzyme complex was identified within plant pathogen *Pectobacterium atrosepticum* that had the potential to improve our understanding of these complexes and help with better application of these types of enzymes in the future. My PhD was supervised within a division focusing on genetics, microbiology, molecular biology, biochemistry and structural biology; however with the move to a plant pathogen, I also conducted research collaboratively with a world-renowned plant pathogen facility.

I feel a lot of my journey leading up to the PhD start was fortuitous. I received encouragement from the right people at the right times to overcome imposter syndrome and take the leap to apply for an EastBio PhD. Little did I know at the time but the ability to think and explore how my research could be applied within this project was vital for my PhD success. I now know I needed to see future application in my work, not just a 'why does it work that way', but a 'how can I use that to aim for progressive, real world changes'.

I enjoyed taking on roles outside of the lab that had more obvious outputs, like becoming the EastBio representative to get involved in event organisation. Or being part of local outreach projects and supervising undergraduate and high school summer science teams to compete internationally. All these opportunities were made possible by the EastBio PhD; they engaged me, inspired me and they helped me to understand my own career aspirations.

I did my PIPS with Actelion in Basel, Switzerland, which was undergoing an interesting merger with J&J at the time. I think the PIPS placement helped me to understand that there is not a monopoly on great science in the academic sector; private companies can be involved in world-changing research with an

applied goal in mind too. I've never been someone motivated by money or title, but seeing groups of great scientists work together efficiently through multiple strands of biology, chemistry and physics to deliver real world outcomes was really inspiring to me. It was something I didn't know at the time would be a key driver to my career progression.

As my PhD was finalised, most of the lab was moving south from Dundee to Newcastle, and originally I thought I would be saying goodbye to the whole team and going my own way. That was until my supervisor secured funding for a blue sky project. I had always had an interest in the project from afar, so it was an immediate yes. The Post-doc started, I moved south, but I lost a lot of confidence in my own abilities as I struggled to get the project moving. Then COVID19 hit, my mental health declined further. It would be fair to say I had to dig deep to continue, and the pause gave me an opportunity to think and feel around the question 'what do I want?'. This was not a question I regularly gave much thought.

I thought back to my PIPS, the times I was on panels with other PhD students or university reps working as teams to make an event happen. I also thought back to being involved in an outreach or advisory team for junior lab teams. What was the common theme here? Why did I enjoy it? – Team work! Due to COVID19 and the nature of the move to Newcastle, that was much harder to find in the Post-doc, but luckily, the EastBio experience during my PhD had allowed me a taste of this, a reference point to shape my career change around.

Another part of the EastBio experience that influenced my next moves was the exposure to Scotland as a hub for great science, a sphere I didn't want to leave. I searched for start-ups, spinouts and SMEs within the many science networks here in Scotland. After a 6-month search, I eventually found myself interviewing to join an early-stage spin-out company with a lot of academic influence. Initially, I was drawn to the progressive aims of the company, to change the world for the better, but then I also discovered it was run by two co-founding professors and so I felt I would learn a lot with the career move. When I joined, everyone worked as a single team with a lot of individual workflows. Nowadays we're working within teams on the same workflows, sharing ideas and outcomes to help each other. Within this company there are so many interesting opportunities for multidisciplinary work and designing experiments that can have real world impact, in teams! I have found what I was searching for, I found 'what I wanted', and I'm incredibly grateful for the skills and exposure I received during my EastBio PhD for getting me to this position.

If I could offer advice to any EastBio student or alumni, I'd say to try and pinpoint 'what you want' and how you've come to that thought or feeling – your EastBio training and exposure will guide you. Stay curious with your own wants and the opportunities out there in academia and industry.



Guidance for planning and running thematic meetings

At Induction, with support from EastBio and the group's academic Chair, each group decides on:

- The host teams of student(s) and supervisor(s) who will be leading each session
- The four focal topics
- Likely dates of each session
- Format/delivery (in-person or remotely)

Although there is considerable variety in the projects assigned to each area, groups are to try and agree on focus topics that are of interest to the majority of students and help them to expand their broader understanding of the stakes in conducting interdisciplinary, collaborative research.

Sessions should primarily be in-person but you may consider one of the four meetings to run remotely if there are significant concerns from the majority about travel to attend an in-person meeting.

At the Induction, you will also meet second-year student reps and they can also advise you from their own experience of having delivered or attended thematic meetings!

Before the meeting

Each session should have one nominated student-supervisor team who plan and facilitate the session with the support of the rest of the group; please ensure that there are at least 2/3 students helping in the organisation of each session. Volunteers will not only be helping with sharing the organisational burden more fairly and bring further ideas to the meeting, they will also gain useful skills in event management, leadership, team-work, decision-making and problem-solving.

Local administrators – these are the departmental officers of the institution where the thematic meeting is hosted; see details at:

www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/contact-us/programme-contacts

They can provide support in booking rooms and ordering catering. *You should contact them in the first instance, and costs can then be invoiced to EastBio.* EastBio will need a quote for the costs in advance.

As a rule of thumb, EastBio provides up to £20 per delegate for catering and will try to cover additional travel expenses for any guest speakers *but this must be approved in advance.* Students are expected to cover their travel expenses where applicable through their RTSG.

Once a session is confirmed, please notify the EastBio team, providing details for the website and Newsletter, including a summary and schedule - *ideally 1 month in advance of the meeting.* Organisers are responsible for confirming sign-ups and sending reminders so do stay in touch with your group during the planning stages.

Before the meeting

You should make sure to take attendance and circulate the feedback form here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/CYvtptXjvB>

The day should be scheduled with plenty of breaks. Please bear in mind accessibility requirements and consider circulating resources and slides in advance.



After the meeting

Circulate any resources and the feedback form to attendees; consider that any external guest may ask for feedback on their session.

Report attendance to EastBio.

We also suggest that each group produces a short digital resource that highlights the learning gained from the sessions (e.g., podcast, video, poster, animation) which can be used on the EastBio website and social media. Remember that future cohorts may look at how you've delivered your sessions and what you've got out of these!



Placements

PIPS Quotes from students and institutional hosts:

I feel I have been able to get to know the staff and ethos of Crohn's & Colitis UK (CCUK) which, as the UK's biggest inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) charity, may be important in my career in research which focuses on gut inflammation and IBD. I also feel I have made a contribution to CCUK which can genuinely be useful to them and that this passion for wanting to improve the lives of those with IBD is displayed in my work.

Broc Drury (Edinburgh, 2022 cohort)

The development of the UKHSA surveillance strategy and wider bio-surveillance development is being delivered at a fast pace by a very small team of civil servants. The intern worked on the PIPS project "Environmental Monitoring for Health Protection – Supporting the development of surveillance strategies" and has facilitated the rapid consolidation of knowledge from a much larger body of work, often providing daily insights, data, and documentation that has enabled this team to develop products for senior decision-makers overseeing the work with the required level of acuity and pace. Although the surveillance strategies will continue to develop, the internship has ensured that they will be delivered on time and with care and attention necessary for success. These outputs will shape the future of UK surveillance and bio-surveillance over the next 7 years, helping government and associated stakeholders prepare for, prevent, or mitigate against a wide range of hazards and threats.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

The PIPS project "Utilisation of MinION in detection of quarantine plant pathogens" was aimed to investigate the potential of using nanopore sequencing as a diagnostics tool for detecting quarantine plant pathogens, using potato viruses as a model. The intern compared this to currently utilised methods of pathogen detection and determined approximate limits of detection. The main outputs from this project were a bioinformatics pipeline for handling the sequencing data that they developed which can be used by SASA in the future, and the report of their project which summarised the capabilities of MinION for diagnosing potato viruses and further considerations they have identified that would need to be addressed to enable it to be used as a diagnostic tool.

Science & Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA)

I produced high level reports of the impact of covid in the Academy of Medical Sciences' grants, showing my ability to extract, understand and communicate complex information. In addition, the support I gave in the organization and running of one in person event for training leaders in medical sciences, showing my organization skill, as well as my ability to improvise without letting the level of the event/content drop.

Rafael Monteiro do Carmo (Dundee, 2021 cohort)

At Phycoworks, I learned the commercial aspect of software/biology product development, current market interest in the biology-based products, as well as how to navigate through the interests of different stakeholders in these processes. It was a great experience to be a part of a highly interdisciplinary team who brought in their domain expertise to work on a cleaner future. I found it surprising how many different tools that were being employed to keep things organised (data, meetings, future plans) as the company grew over time. It was rather challenging to troubleshoot and navigate the complexities of biology when experiments did not work as expected.

Mert Unal (Edinburgh, 2021 cohort)

The professional skills, such as critical and analytical thinking, communication, and adaptability, that I further developed during my internship at the Southeast Scotland Cancer Research Network will be highly valuable in the upcoming years of my PhD.

Additionally, research in the cancer field is one of the potential career pathways I am considering after completing my PhD. This internship provided me with the opportunity to introduce myself and network with professionals in this field, which will be extremely beneficial if I decide to pursue this path.

.....
Gabriele Bagusinskaite
(Edinburgh, 2022 cohort)

During my placement at the National Farmers Union Scotland Policy Team, I gained a greater understanding of how research can be translated into 'real life' situations and gave me an alternative way of looking at how work from my PhD can be applied. I enjoyed my placement immensely and would like to thank everyone on the policy team at NFUS with particular highlights including the NFU AGM and farm visits.

.....
Hannah Peaty
(Moredun Research Institute, 2022 cohort)

General

The Professional Internships for PhD Students are unique to UKRI BBSRC-funded DTPs and form an essential and mandatory component of the EastBio programme.

The only exception to this requirement are Collaborative students who must spend a minimum of 3 months placement with their industrial partner company instead. International students may be restricted in the type of placement they can consider due to visa regulations, therefore you are asked to consult the relevant EastBio guidance on the PIPS Guide and contact the DTP Manager for confirmation of your options and plans.

Undertaking a PIPS will expose you to a non-academic professional work environment and provide you with experience and confidence that will make the transition into the next stage of your career easier to achieve. PIPS is an excellent opportunity to explore your aspirations and try something new. Internships can be undertaken in any field or sector of non-academic activity, including biotech industry, business administration, communications, scientific publishing, project management, teaching and outreach. Current and prospective EastBio students share their experiences via short blog reports and presentations at the Placements Q&A session and poster sessions at the Annual Symposia.

Students on tier-4 visa, who are not on a PhD programme integrated with an internship and who have to do an adjusted work placement, will receive formal guidance from the EastBio DTP Manager.

All information about placements, including the comprehensive PIPS Guide, can be found at:

.....
www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/training/placements
.....

Placement funding

You will continue to receive your stipend during your placement.

PIPS-related expenses, such as travel and accommodation, must be covered by your RTSG (£5,000 per year between Y1-Y3) or supported by your PIPS provider. If the PIPS host organisation is situated 50 miles or more from your term-time address, you may also apply to EastBio for an additional sum of £1,000 maximum towards such costs. We ask students considering a placement abroad to be mindful of budgetary limitations.

PIPS Expectations

The following points summarise what EastBio expects from you:

- Source a suitable PIPS project with an eligible PIPS provider
- Plan the PIPS into your PhD work plan, in collaboration with your academic supervisor(s)
- Complete all the necessary paperwork and share them with EastBio, your host university and/or host organisation, in accordance with milestones and deadlines set out in the PIPS Guide
- Engage with your PIPS provider in a professional manner throughout your planning
- Carry out and complete a PIPS of suitable length and scope whilst adopting a professional behaviour in the host organisation
- Present your experience to other EastBio students

Suitable Internships

PIPS is a defined project with tangible outcomes that can be carried out in any non-academic organisation as long as it gives you a professional experience outside your immediate research environment. This is a chance to think creatively about the types of experience that carry long-term career benefits.

The following are just a few examples of PIPS work:

- Carrying out an applied research project in industry
- Administering a research project or grant
- Developing policy for a research council or a government agency
- Carrying out a marketing project for a company or organisation
- Communicating science to the public or younger audiences through an outreach programme
- Developing or helping to develop a new product or service for a company

Planning your PIPS

It is important to think of the following possible constraints:

- The timing of your most important experiments
- Field-work seasons you may need to work around
- Resource bottlenecks in your research project
- Conferences, meetings and training you may want to attend
- Family commitments
- Costs associated with your internship such as travel and accommodation

You should consider completing some relevant generic skills training in preparation for PIPS, such as CV-writing and interviewing skills; entrepreneurship; time and project management; communication skills.

Paperwork

The Placements page on the EastBio website has all the information and forms you will need to plan your placement and submit relevant paperwork to EastBio. Although this is a student-led project, we ask you to stay in touch with EastBio as the team can assist with advice.

Before travelling overseas, it is essential that you and your supervisor follow these steps:

- Complete all necessary Risk Assessment procedures as defined by your local institution and the EastBio PIPS Abroad Checklist
- Submit a Leave of Absence form to your local institution
- Tier-4 Visa students should check with their local Immigration office and EastBio before they start planning any placement abroad

CASE Studentships

EastBio supports a number of CASE studentships according to BBSRC guidelines.

These are studentships in collaboration with an industrial partner in areas such as biotechnology, energy, environment, agriculture, livestock breeding and fishing, crops, data and computing, policy and government. CASE projects are led by the PhD supervisor with a named non-academic co-supervisor, both of whom are responsible for the completion of the project and the support of the CASE student. Integral part of CASE studentships is a CASE placement between 3-18 months at the premises of the industrial partner. The placement (in lieu of PIPS) provides students with training not available at an academic context while also fitting with the partner's business priorities.

EastBio expectations

CASE supervisors

(academic and non-academic)

- Discuss early the CASE project with the student and agree on a workplan; review plans as necessary
- Share a Welcome Pack including key contacts in the partner institutions, provisional calendar of meetings, expected contributions and available resources from the industrial partner, expected benefits and outcomes, etc.
- Draft a CASE agreement and share it with the EastBio DTP Manager
- Discuss and agree with the student a CASE placement with their professional requirements in focus
- Complete a CASE placement agreement and share with the EastBio DTP Manager
- Consider attending the EastBio Induction, Placements Q&A session, and impact Symposia

- Consider contributing to other training opportunities with an industrial or broader impacts focus
- Liaise with the EastBio Industry Engagement subcommittee to share feedback, recommendations or concerns

CASE students

- Make sure you read and understand the CASE project and any formal agreements that are drawn with the CASE partner
- Be pro-active in discussing and agreeing with the supervisory team the PhD project plan and seek clarity about mutual expectations as early as possible; review plans as necessary
- Be pro-active and collaborate with your CASE partner to finalise your CASE placement plans
- Stay in contact with EastBio to share feedback, progress or concerns about your CASE project and placement

Training costs and funding

We aim to provide all your training free of charge or at a minimal cost. Each of you will have access to the following funds (in addition to fees and stipend paid monthly, in advance, by your BBSRC studentship) to support your training:

UKRI Stipend for 2024-2025:

Fees and stipend levels are confirmed annually and are inflation-adjusted:

- A stipend of £19,237 full-time equivalent
- Support for tuition fees of £4,786 per year

Research Training Grant (RTSG) or bench fees:

£5,000 per annum; this is reduced to £1,500 in year 4. This grant may be held directly by you or your supervisor, or by your department. It should be used to cover the research costs incurred by your project, additional costs related to travel and fees for training activities, conferences and other training events, EastBio training and placement costs, or to purchase a laptop at the start of your programme. Unspent funds roll over onto the next academic year when they can be spent for eligible costs. Upon registering at your host institution, you should receive guidance about accessing these funds; if you have questions, please contact your local administrator (for all EastBio contacts, see end of the Handbook)

Travel and conference allowance:

£230 per year to support expenses involved where training is delivered in person rather than online

EastBio In-Vivo Skills Bursary (2024/25):

EastBio funding of up to £500.00 per student per award maximum available via competitive application to eligible EastBio students who need travel support to access training in Advanced In Vivo Skills

PIPS Additional Expenses:

Where your placement involves significant additional costs, you can apply to our bursary (up to £1,000 per award maximum for travel and/or accommodation). Further details are on the PIPS Guide. CASE students may also apply for this bursary.

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA):

As a UKRI-funded student, you are entitled to additional individual support on the basis of a diagnosed disability that calls for specific adjustments or supportive measures during your programme of study. Students should request an interview with their local Disability Officer who will draft a Needs Assessment Report with advised DSA recommendations and liaise with EastBio to ensure that the measures will be implemented.

Continues on page 34

Your PhD study is funded for 4 years full-time equivalent. EastBio studentships are regulated by the UKRI Terms and Conditions, including details about sick leave, family leave, part-time study and work, vet enhancement, early completion, etc. We encourage you to familiarise yourself with the details via:

[www.ukri.org/
wpcontent/uploads/
2024/04/UKRI
020424TrainingGrant
TermsConditionsApril
2024.pdf](http://www.ukri.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/04/UKRI020424TrainingGrantTermsConditionsApril2024.pdf)

For advice on how to access your studentship funds, you should contact the graduate school or departmental administrator at your local institution in the first instance as they hold and manage your studentship funds.

Events

Induction

The EastBio induction is a mandatory welcome event for all new students and their supervisors.

It is an opportunity to find out more about the partnership and programme, ask questions, meet your peers and your supervisor. At the induction, you will be asked to start thinking about your thematic group area and potential topics. This year the induction will take place on the 9th of October, followed by a mandatory training day on 10th October, in Stirling (Stirling Court Hotel).

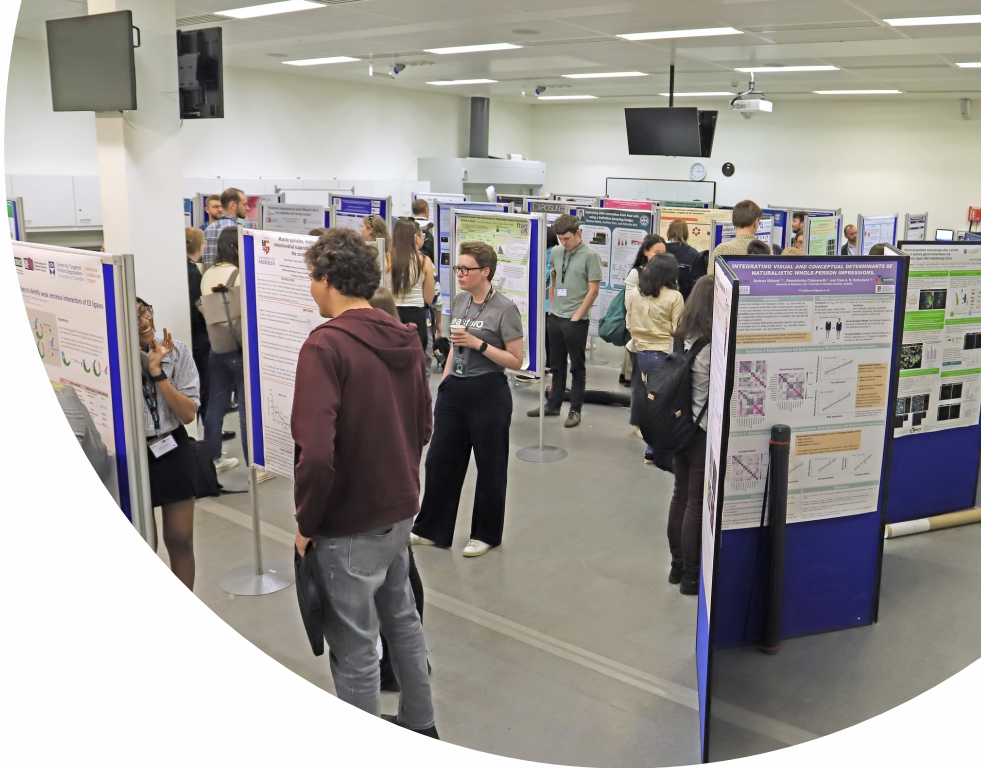
Symposium

The summer Annual Symposia are all-cohort events to celebrate the research you carry out and its impacts, and are organised by second- and first-year student representatives from all partner institutions.

Symposia are held each year at a different DTP location, when possible, and are supported by the EastBio team with oversight from the Symposium academic host.

Of the annual symposia you will be asked to attend during your PhD, two have a focus on bioscience research and two on societal or industrial impacts of bioscience research:

- EastBio Research Symposia – presentations given by EastBio students on their research (CASE students do not present their work at this event)
- EastBio Impact Symposia – Industry-style presentations given by EastBio CASE students only, alongside IBioIC PhD students, plus invited speakers exploring the broader impacts of science in terms of society, commerce, policy and business



The Symposia provide you with excellent skills development opportunities, depending on your individual contribution as a delegate or organiser/facilitator – for instance, to prepare a pitch or a poster, present and discuss your research with the wider research community, invite the speakers you like to meet, chair sessions, network with a variety of stakeholders, contribute to debates and take part in interactive workshops.

Wellbeing underpins the planning for this training and we welcome recommendations to enhance the diversity, inclusivity and accessibility of all sessions and activities in planning and delivery.

The next EastBio Annual Symposium with a focus on the societal impacts of research will be hosted and held at the University of Edinburgh on the 3-4 June 2025; please save this date on your diary. EastBio supervisors are expected to attend at least one of the two days and we will ask for volunteers for particular contributions.

Make sure you check regularly the EastBio website for updates, at:

www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/training/eastbio-symposia

Dr Michael McDonald

Institute of Quantitative
Biology, Biotechnology
and Biochemistry,
The University of Edinburgh

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Graduate Experience II

I completed my EastBio studentship between 2016-2024 at the University of Edinburgh, where I undertook my doctoral degree part time. Following completion of my MSc, I worked in a lab studying bacterial isolates from soil and screened them for potential oil-degrading activity. During this time, I became interested in the role of microbial communities in underpinning ecosystem health, as well as their relevance in biotechnology. After this, I knew I wanted to pursue a PhD and continue to work in research.

My PhD focused on the diversity and determination of functional attributes of microbial communities which inhabit extremely contaminated effluents resulting from mining activities. Due to the hazardous chemical nature of mining wastes, extremophilic microbial species which can proliferate under these conditions had been largely ignored previously, despite their ability to aid in ecosystem recovery. I was interested in the role of these microorganisms in metal detoxification and greenhouse gas production, and how we can exploit these functions. My work shed new light on these underappreciated microbial species in a previously mined site in Central Scotland, using metagenomic, chemical and metabolic analyses.

I had planned to complete my PhD as a full-time student. However, during the early stages of my first year, my physical health was deteriorating, and I required several surgeries. The ability to convert to a part-time programme when I returned to work helped hugely in allowing me to still continue with my PhD. The built-in flexibility of my part-time programme was fundamental in allowing me to be awarded with my PhD this year. My PhD supervisor, thesis committee and EastBio staff supported me throughout and ensured I could succeed during my time as a doctoral researcher despite health issues. As a new PhD student, it's important to know that everyone involved with your DTP wants you to succeed. Support is available when you

need it, and my experience is testament that external issues should not prevent completion of a doctoral thesis.

Alongside becoming a technically proficient scientist during my research, other highlights of my PhD came from outside the lab. The Microbiology Society interviewed me and published a press release on my PhD, which shared my work with a wider audience. My PIPs placement was also really enjoyable. These experiences allowed me to diversify my skills beyond lab techniques. I also enjoyed supporting undergraduate and postgraduate taught students who joined our lab for projects.

Since completing my PhD, I have continued to work at Edinburgh University as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. The skills gained during my PhD let me transition into a new academic position as well as engage with a research project in a different lab. Your PhD will equip you with a multitude of skills for your future career in the life sciences!

Good luck with your research and congratulations on your new PhD position!



EDI in context

The EastBio Management and EastBio team are committed to supporting the research and professional development of all students in line with the UKRI BBSRC Duty of Care pledge as laid out in the key documents below:

UKRI Statement of Expectations for Postgraduate Training

www.ukri.org/files/legacy/skills/statementofexpectation-revisedseptember2016v2-pdf/

2019 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

[Researcher-Development-Concordat_Sept2019-1.pdf](#)

The UKRI EDI Policy

www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UKRI-250321-EqualityDiversityInclusionPolicy-V2.0.pdf

In this context, EastBio values diversity and inclusion in all forms and strongly supports you in bringing your whole self to work. We also expect our students to be proactive advocates of respect and integrity, equality and diversity in their own practice. We not only embed EDI principles across the EastBio programme, from recruitment to training, but we also work with our EDI student reps, the EDI subcommittee and the Advisory Board to assess the effect of our measures and review the action plan to address key goals and priorities.

Following such consultation, we have amended the student reps' role description, provided enhanced EDI training to student reps and student cohorts, and secured funding to support individual students who experienced adversity or with additional challenges. Further EDI-focused measures are listed below. We are committed to enhancing support to supervisors on the basis of evidence and the feedback we have been collecting.

EastBio EDI Measures

- A set of EDI policies, goals and information via a dynamic EDI Statement that is reviewed annually, see:

www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/equality-diversity-inclusion

- The EastBio EDI subcommittee that oversees our EDI policy and measures to meet agreed goals, reviewed annually; within this remit, the committee can make decisions and/or recommendations to the Management
- Equal opportunities policy at recruitment: we monitor diversity data of applicants and mitigate for any gaps in representation on the basis of this evidence; we collect feedback on recruitment by all shareholders that helps to inform our annual process review. In the last recruitment, we operated a guaranteed interview scheme for home-fees BAME students that has been successfully implemented. Contact us if you want more details about this crucial aspect of the programme
- We support a group of EDI Student Reps from any year of study with a standard term of 2 years and work with them to assess our on-the-programme support. The EDI rep role is to represent your peers to the Management Group, raise concerns and propose measures to address issues as they arise. We offer additional training to EDI student reps after assessment of needs. We also want to hear of your suggestions that enhance practices of belonging, resilience, respect and recognition across our community

All EastBio subcommittees have one EDI student rep to ensure that EDI principles are embedded across the programme, from recruitment to industry engagement

- We have secured training to provide Mental Health First Aid training to an increasing number of volunteer students and supervisors and currently provide support to students on the programme via the **EastBio Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) group**, including a dedicated mailbox, a dedicated item on the monthly Newsletter and drop-in sessions):

eastbio.mhfa@eastscotbiotdp.ac.uk

- Communication disadvantage can be mitigated by our recognition that students, supervisors and staff communicate differently. Following a programme audit by the Communication Inclusive People last year, we have begun implementing Inclusive Communication measures: these include a practical Inclusive Communication guide, update of the EDI Statement and the standard EastBio registration form, encouraging communication-diverse individuals to actively engage with the programme and continuous monitoring of these measures
- We support cross-DTP initiatives such as the BBSRC DTP LGBTQIA Network 2024, the joint EastBio/NorthWestBio DTP EDI day, piloted in 2024, and the cross-institutional University of Nottingham network for neurodivergent students

EDI and Wellbeing Training

Event Date and Location	Event Title and Description
9-Oct-24 <i>Stirling</i>	How To Start As You Mean To Go On
11-Nov-24 <i>Online</i>	Where Do You Draw The Line
14-Nov-24 <i>Online</i>	Neurodiversity Awareness for Supervisors
15-Nov-24 <i>Online</i>	Where Do You Draw The Line
13-Jan-25 <i>Online</i>	Where Do You Draw The Line
17-Jan-24 <i>Online</i>	Where Do You Draw The Line
10-Apr-25 <i>Online</i>	The Resilient Researcher
22-Apr-25 <i>Online</i>	The Resilient Researcher
tbc <i>Online</i>	Mental Health First Aid Training

Support

Where to get support

It is important that you familiarise yourself with your statutory rights as a UKRI-funded student via:

www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UKRI-020424-TrainingGrantTermsConditionsApril2024.pdf

Below are some key aspects of your entitlement:

- You will continue to receive stipend for periods of sick leave of up to 13 weeks within any 12-month period during your PhD
- You can take maternity, paternity or adoption leave, both paid and unpaid
- You can switch to part-time study at any point after discussion with your PhD supervisor and the local department; you may need to confirm an adapted training plan, especially in the early years of the switch
- If you submit your PhD thesis before the end of your 4th year, you will continue to receive your stipend for the quarter within your submission date (Jan-March; April-June; July-Sept, Oct-Dec)
- Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
You are eligible for disability-based support (DSA) by contacting your local Disability team that will then liaise with EastBio to implement the recommendations of your Needs Assessment Report, including any financial measures. Depending on your requirements, DSA may be offered once or be reviewed frequently for continuing support during your PhD

www.ukri.org/publications/disabled-students-allowance-dsa-framework/

See below for a list of the disability services of EastBio partner institutions

Aberdeen

www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/disability-services-6467.php

Dundee

www.dundee.ac.uk/disability-services

Edinburgh

www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service

St. Andrews

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/advice/disabilities/

Stirling

www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/accessibility-and-inclusion/

SRUC

www.sruc.ac.uk/study-with-us/student-life/student-support/education-support/

EDI Contacts

We recognise that students will face challenges during their PhD programme. As you are exploring support options, be aware of the following contacts available to you:

- Your supervisor, local PGR advisor or local student Advisor or Administrator
- The EastBio team (Support Officer and/or DTP Manager) that can advise you and escalate serious concerns to the academic lead for your institution or the Management Group
- The EastBio Mental Health First Aid Group
- The EastBio complaint form via:

<https://forms.office.com/e/rxe5LdcftM>

- You may seek wellbeing advice confidentially from any of the above contacts. Remember that any steps discussed remain subject to your explicit permission
- EastBio Privacy Statement:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio>

- If you believe that you or a colleague has been subjected to inappropriate behaviour, please act promptly to report the issue so that steps can be taken to address the situation immediately. If unsure, please refer to the UKRI's position statement on bullying and harassment. Information available via the link:

[www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/
supporting-healthyresearch-and-innovation-
culture/bullying-and-harassment/](http://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/supporting-healthyresearch-and-innovation-culture/bullying-and-harassment/)

Further Support

Below are some of the local services across a number of areas available to you, including external resources:

Aberdeen

[www.abdn.ac.uk/
students/support/
student-advice-support-
office.php#panel3599](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/student-advice-support-office.php#panel3599)

Dundee

[www.dundee.ac.uk/
student-services](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/student-services)

Edinburgh - CSE

[www.ed.ac.uk/biology/
currentstudents/
postgraduate-taught/
health-wellbeing/
diversity-inclusion/
support-for-families](http://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/currentstudents/postgraduate-taught/health-wellbeing/diversity-inclusion/support-for-families)

and

[www.ed.ac.uk/biology/
equality-and-diversity/
networks-groups-clubs/
working-carers-network](http://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/equality-and-diversity/networks-groups-clubs/working-carers-network)

Edinburgh – CMVM

[www.ed.ac.uk/roslin/working/
benefits/support-for-
parents-carers](http://www.ed.ac.uk/roslin/working/benefits/support-for-parents-carers)

Stirling

[www.stir.ac.uk/
student-life/
support-wellbeing/
student-support-services/
money-support/discretionary-
and-assistance-funds/](http://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/money-support/discretionary-and-assistance-funds/)

Hardship/Discretionary Fund:

If you are faced with significant challenges, we advise you that you first discuss with your supervisor and local administrator.

Aberdeen

www.abdn.ac.uk/students/finance/money-matters-3712.php

Dundee

www.dundee.ac.uk/guides/apply-discretionary-funding

Edinburgh

www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/hardship-funding

St. Andrews

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/pgstudents/money/financialsupport/discretionary-fund/

Stirling

www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/money-support/

Counselling Services:

Aberdeen

www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support/counselling-service.php

Dundee

www.dundee.ac.uk/counselling

Edinburgh

www.ed.ac.uk/counselling-services

St. Andrews

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/advice/counselling/

Stirling

www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/your-mental-health-and-wellbeing/

SRUC

www.sruc.ac.uk/courses-training/student-support/

Further support resources:

<https://bbstem.co.uk/>

www.bwisnetwork.co.uk

<https://thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/>

www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/

www.brothersinarmsscotland.co.uk/

www.mind.org.uk/need-urgent-help/using-this-tool

www.crusescotland.org.uk/

<https://www.studentsagainstdepression.org/>

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/starting-a-doctorate/overcoming-challenges-common-to-doctoral-researchers>



Information for Supervisors

EastBio is committed to transparent communication about our governance, recruitment process, training programme and broader impacts.

Our annual programme is mapped onto the priorities and goals set out in our portfolio agreement that all EastBio partner institutions have agreed with the BBSRC. It represents our programmatic commitment across the duration of the training grant in support of the 5 cohorts of students recruited from 2020 to 2024. This Handbook presents the set of measures and actions we have taken to ensure excellent training provision for the grant's fifth intake of PhD students.

As a PhD supervisor in this scheme, the EastBio Management Group expects that you will actively support activities within the programme in support of your student and in view of positive future impacts on research, industry and the society in general. At the same time, we explore ways to support you personally as you contribute to the professional development of your supervisees and meet our programme expectations. We welcome your input and suggestions for its improvement within the shifting priorities around research and researcher development.

To this end, we have developed a Charter for EastBio supervisors that clarifies how we interpret our contract with the funding body, our students and supervisors. The aim of this document is to contribute to a consistent supervisory practice within the programme by providing information on the partnership, its governance, expectations, training and impacts.

Following the 2023/24 Programme review, we are committed to enhance the support for our supervisors via a number of ways:

- More opportunities for interacting with the Management Group and subcommittees
- Review of our communication approach and develop meaningful digital resources to assist with:
 - Research networking (Research Brochure)
 - Nominating candidates/securing funding
 - Student onboarding and alignment of expectations
 - Support to secure and complete CASE projects
- Consider mitigations for evidence of under-representation of research labs at recruitment (currently in progress)
- Initiatives to recognise academic citizenship, or contributions to inclusive research culture
- Consider enhanced and flexible EastBio training for supervisors: e.g. Networking and/or MH sessions that are embedded to Induction and Symposia events that supervisors already attend
- Collaborate to capture post-graduation impacts

EastBio Contacts

If you have any publications, an interesting knowledge exchange or outreach experience, if you completed your PhD, email enquiries@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk or post to **@EastBioDTP**.

We are keen to celebrate your news!

All the individuals named below will be happy to be contacted.

EastBio Support Team

EastBio Support Team
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EastBio Academic Management

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Professor Eileen Wall
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Dr Alison McIntosh
SULSA Director
Alison.McIntosh@glasgow.ac.uk

Student Representatives

You can find the details of the EastBio student representatives and how to contact them on our website.

Student representatives, with a 2-year term, are responsible for feeding back to the Management Group and subcommittees, as well as helping to facilitate cohort building, leading on the annual Symposium, and representing EastBio at various events throughout the year. We aim to have representatives from each partner institution, as well as EDI student reps and we will ask you whether you want to sit at one of the subcommittees.

Subcommittees

EastBio subcommittees were set up to manage the different aspects of the programme in a way that optimises decision-making, transparency and responsiveness to shifting priorities.

The subcommittees are as follows:

- Recruitment subcommittee
- Training and Development subcommittee
- Industry Engagement subcommittee
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion subcommittee

You can find the details of the membership of each subcommittee online. Please reach out to them if you have anything you would like to raise.

Appendix

Form Links

Professional Development

Record form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/nSXPPb4i88>

Training feedback form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/1rAZAPBUMv>

Thematic Meetings feedback form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/CYvtptXjVB>

External Training and Development

Points Approval Application:

<https://forms.office.com/e/W8LXbXsBsf>

PIPS Planning form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/jtGxnJfX7y>

Complaint form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/rxe5LdcftM>



Date of preparation

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Designed by

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this Handbook was correct at the time of publication.

EastBio training courses are subject to ongoing development which could necessitate alteration or cancellation to advertised courses.

Should you notice any errors or inaccuracies in this Handbook or on our training pages, please email enquiries@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk to let us know.