

Supervisor Handbook

Contents

Supervisor Handbook.....	1
General.....	1
Governance	2
Recruitment.....	2
Student onboarding.....	3
Training & Development	4
Students.....	4
Supervisor Support.....	5
Impact	6
Review and Evolution.....	6

General

In the context of the UKRI BBSRC overarching vision underpinning good supervisory practice, this resource helps to develop a benchmark for *consistency of experience* whilst acknowledging the foundational autonomy of partner host institutions. To this end, it formulates a number of basic definitions behind the contractual relationship between the EastBio Doctoral Training Partnership and EastBio supervisors based at partner institutions within the regulatory frame of UKRI BBSRC. It also seeks to list the means of support and guidance that should allow supervisors to fulfil the set of expectations.

EastBio has been funded uninterruptedly by BBSRC since 2012 to recruit and provide excellent training to a body of doctoral students to enable them to generate positive impacts in research, industry and society. Academics based at one of our nine partner institutions – the East of Scotland Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, St Andrews, Stirling, as well as Scotland’s Rural College, James Hutton Institute, Moredun Research Institute and IBioIC – join our community after successfully recruiting doctoral candidates via a competitive recruitment that is managed by the EastBio Management Group. The majority of the studentships we award are co-funded by BBSRC and the host institution and are managed according to the UKRI Terms and Conditions, from stipend levels and bench fees to part-time study to regulations governing extensions, sick, maternity, paternity and adoption leave, disabled student allowance, etc. The primary remit of the EastBio programme involves the training events and activities that we run centrally or in collaboration with our stakeholders each year and launch after the October EastBio Induction Day. EastBio provides support and guidance to students who join the programme

so that they complete their PhD research and the EastBio training programme and professional placement and, if full-time, submit their PhD thesis within the 4 years of their funding.

[About EastBio](#)

[Funder Terms and Conditions](#)

[Student cohorts](#)

Governance

EastBio is governed by the Management Group consisting of one academic lead per partner institution, including the DTP Manager and the Support Office, with the overall responsibility to conform with our proposal commitments to BBSRC, as agreed by all partner institutions. The EMG meets a minimum of four times per year, two of which in person at the Induction and the Annual Symposia, and ad hoc to address emerging issues. Four separate committees, each consisting of a management and a student rep chair, plus deputies, address key aspects of the programme: Recruitment, EDI, Training & Development, and Industry Engagement. Each committee has decision-making responsibilities, can make recommendations and raise issues and concerns to the attention of the EMG; these are introduced at both the Induction and the Annual Symposia events each year. Integral part of our governance are our student reps, who represent each partner institution but can also join a committee and serve for a minimum of 2 years; students get additional training points in recognition of their contributions in that capacity. Finally, the work of the DTP is assessed, in terms of its broad direction, strategic rigour and horizon scanning, by our Advisory Board with senior representatives from external organisations and HEIs, doctoral partnerships, and industry. These governing mechanisms ensure that EastBio maintains a transparent, evolving and responsive approach to delivering its programme.

[Programme contacts](#)

[Programme subcommittees](#)

[Student reps](#)

Recruitment

Academics are crucial to the success of the programme through the excellence of their research, supervision practice and engagement with the EastBio programme. In terms of the EastBio recruitment, jointly run across the partner institutions, we ask supervisors to submit a PhD project, including collaborative ones with non-academic partners, and then nominate applicants for assessment by the cross-institutional EastBio selection panels. EastBio provides written guidance about the process, the criteria and the support provided to applicants to maintain standards of fairness and transparency across each annual cycle and throughout the different recruitment stages. Prospective supervisors play a role at specific points in the recruitment timeline but are not directly involved after the nomination stage. This is to ensure competitive, equal-opportunities assessment, programme- and cohort-level consistency, and conformity with our EDI priorities. EastBio acknowledges that nominating PIs may provide candidates with informal mentoring and complements this by running open, online Q&A sessions, with volunteers from current student cohorts. To counteract effects of bias in the selection process, we aim to enhance measures of support by additional guidance, especially for students who are external to the PI research group. Going forward, EastBio is also committed to collecting evidence of underrepresented PI groups in the partnership in terms of either attracting or recruiting candidates and to explore

mitigating measures to address such issues.

[Student Guidance](#) (reviewed annually)

Supervisor Guidance (TBC) (reviewed annually)

Student onboarding

We acknowledge that supervisors are expected to conform to their institutional policies for student induction, that may overlap to a degree with EastBio inductions activities. Please use your discretion to balance these expectations as best suits the local institutional context and make sure that your local EastBio student cohorts have the chance to meet with their peers early on. Also note that we have developed a [form](#) to help as preparation for your first meeting with your supervisee: please consider using it to discuss with your supervisee mutual expectations and agree on a set of principles you will both adhere to (the form should be filled by both the supervisor and the student; it will not be assessed in any way by the EastBio team).

As a PhD supervisor in the EastBio programme, you are expected to:

- Attend the [EastBio Induction](#) to welcome your student and help them start their PhD study; this may be in addition to any local induction activities the student will also be attending;
- Discuss with the student their own expectations about the supervision, and how these can best be met, including the time, manner, frequency and attendance requirements;
- Help and encourage your student to develop ownership of the project and personal agency in managing deadlines, reviewing progress, dealing with setbacks, interpreting feedback, etc.; consider signposting any relevant services of support, as they arise; for that purpose, refer to the [Eastbio Student Handbook](#) and [EDI support](#)
- Be aware that some people communicate differently, including those with a neurodivergent condition (whether diagnosed or not); consider asking the student what is their preferred communication style and try to agree on ways to build any such preferences into your communication 'contract';
- Be aware of cultural, identity, or linguistic challenges that come into play and ensure that support is provided to the student for managing those challenges;
- Consider making your own expectations about work-life balance explicit and make it safe for the student to express their own expectations so that a common ground can be found;
- Introduce your student to the lab members and the supervisor team and ensure that they are settled well; ensure that they know and will have met all key support contacts in the department, including any [EastBio contacts](#), as early as possible (check the website or with the [EastBio team](#), if unsure);
- Ensure that all members of the supervisory team, including the external co-supervisor or the industrial partner, if any, are meaningfully embedded and engaged, according to their respective roles, and that they attend planning and review meetings as per the schedule agreed by all; monitor whether their input is what is expected and make interventions when necessary; ensure good professional relationships are maintained amongst all members.
- Encourage the student to read the [UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions](#)

(reviewed regularly), the [EastBio Student Handbook](#), the [EastBio PIPS Student Guide](#) and any other relevant materials appropriate for their studentship;

[Expectations alignment form](#)

Training & Development

EastBio DTP is funded by BBSRC to deliver excellent training to funded students that will prepare them for careers in academia or industry, with the ability, resilience and skills to navigate evolving and shifting challenges and to create positive impacts that benefit their own development and the society at large. To this end, EastBio has developed a bespoke comprehensive programme that address both our commitments to the funder and the student development needs. The programme is structured so that students can develop agency and shape their development plan by taking flexibly delivered mandatory options and further training whether by EastBio or across the partnership (including external training). A further aim of the programme is to help students develop strong ties with peers, network across our partners and produce lasting relationships. Finally, the programme seeks to provide concrete opportunities for students to develop skills in event, project and time management, leadership and knowledge exchange. We respond to students who face additional challenges by applying flexibility in our requirements as necessary. As a PhD supervisor, EastBio expects that you will actively support activities within the EastBio training programme by a variety of ways, for instance:

- familiarise yourself with these expectations and the training elements
- seek clarification from the team
- provide your student(s) with advice, feedback and encouragement as necessary
- become personally involved in a suitable training event or workshop
- deliver a research or method workshop you hold expertise in
- be pro-active in reviewing or shaping future training options, etc.

[Training overview](#)

[Training 2024/25](#)

[Handbook 2024/25](#)

[Placements](#)

[Induction](#) and [Symposia](#)

Students

Supervisor support to your students is expected primarily in terms of the successful completion of the PhD project but also within the DTP programme requirements. It extends from participation to in-person core events that mark the start and completion of the annual programme (Induction and Symposia), Q&A sessions on the BBSRC Placements scheme, and active engagement with a number of training strands:

- The student-led Thematic sessions that are associated with the strategic area each project is assigned to. In four annual meetings, thematic groups will aim to achieve some mix of the set aims of: cohort-building; developing critical thinking and analysis skills; horizon scanning; exploring shared ground and potential for collaboration; network with external experts from academia, industry, policy, etc. Equally, students directly involved in planning a session should develop project management & communication skills by working with supervisors, external contributors, and their peers, and develop collaborative and interdisciplinary ways of working.

- the Professional Internships for PhD Students (PIPS). Students receive guidance, information and support to plan and carry out their placements in a non-academic context, but it is crucial that they receive your input, support and feedback. Students on a tier-4 visa may require additional support, based on the EastBio tailored advice for international students.
- Volunteer to deliver training for EastBio students in your area of expertise, or on professional or entrepreneurial skills.
- Volunteer to engage in one of the student-led sessions at the Symposia, Induction or REP Induction days, as a speaker, a panel member or a workshop facilitator/assessor, etc.

[Training 2024/25](#)

[Handbook 2024/25](#)

[Placements](#)

[CASE Placements](#)

[Training flexibilities](#)

[Summer placements](#)

Supervisor Support

It is accepted that primary supervisor training is provided by the host institution. What EastBio could provide in this respect is an ideal frame for additional support aiming for a consistency of experience across the partner institutions. We acknowledge that supervisors new to the EastBio programme may require briefing about basic regulatory and governance aspects of the programme. We, therefore, shape the Induction Day to accommodate such briefing needs, including informal opportunities for supervisors to meet with members of the Management Group, the Advisory Board and the team. As these events tend to rotate to different locations and use members of staff to support and deliver the schedules, supervisors can expect different representative combinations at these events.

We enhance supervisor networking opportunities that aim to boost collaborative connections via the [EastBio Research Directory resource](#), as well as supervisor-dedicated networking sessions at Symposia or in collaboration with IBioIC, and by facilitating communities of practice initiatives across the partnership. Eastbio supervisors have access to expertise, facilities and resources held by any partner institutions and are encouraged to approach the local academic lead to inquire about potential research collaboration. Subject on renewed funding, we plan to enhance development opportunities via partnering with the [Next Generation Research SuperVision Project](#) in 2025/26.

EastBio acknowledges the distinction that UKRI proposed between pastoral ‘care’ and pastoral ‘approach’ and expects that the training supervisors receive should prepare them to adopt a sensitive, positive and non-judgemental attitude in their supervisory role. Through EDI training sessions open to all supervisors we aim to consolidate the practice that supports the doctoral candidate as a whole person and facilitates the student development in a respectful, professional and empowering manner.

We provide informal training with an EDI/best practice focus via courses open to all our supervisors -- Neurodiversity Awareness, PhD coaching, and Inclusive Communication -- as

well as opportunities to receive Mental Health First Aid training, either locally or via EastBio (subject on funding). We listen and respond to recommendations from our supervisors on potential areas of support. Two members of the EastBio Advisory Group have expertise on professional development that involves supervisor career progression.

[EastBio Research](#)

[Programme contacts](#)

[EDI support](#)

Impact

Funded students are encouraged to work towards developing the research and professional skills that will allow them to make positive impacts to academic, commercial and societal challenges of the current day. EastBio seeks to capture such impacts during the student life and beyond graduation. We also capture and analyse data on the number of graduates who proceed to work in the industry that hosted their PIPS project. Such records help with a number of key goals we are committed to: (a) allow the Management Group to monitor the efficiency of the programme and review it dynamically; (b) conform to the funder's requirements and other UKRI initiatives, such as the Impact Roadshow; (c) create a pool of representative case studies in aid of our recruitment campaigns and outreach/Widening Participation schemes, such as the Research Experience Placement for undergraduate students. To some extent, we rely on our supervisors and non-academic partners to share stories and evidence of student outcomes, as well as statements of the mutual and continuous benefits that arise from supporting students on standard and CASE PhD projects. We are committed to continue developing the operations centred around impacts.

[Industry collaboration](#)

[Student placements experience](#)

[Summer placements](#)

Review and Evolution

EastBio has adopted a transparent approach to the management of our programme. This is combined with quantitative evidence and survey responses that we report to our funder regularly. The programme monitoring is based on a number of different ways of collecting input from students and supervisors that, together with the recommendations of our stakeholders, including the EastBio Advisory Board, provide the evidence necessary for calibrating future directions. Within the constraints of our team capacity, we continue to improve on means of capturing measures of success, examples of which are the broader partnership impacts and alumni/ae career destination data.

Mechanisms of communication with supervisors include:

- meeting with our supervisors in person at least twice per year at the Induction and Symposia events;
- running partner-held briefing sessions before the launch of each recruitment cycle
- including different PIs from partner institutions to join the EastBio selection panels for each recruitment cycle;
- surveying supervisors for their experience of participating in the recruitment, either as a nominating supervisor or a member in one of the Eastbio shortlisting panels;
- launching, since 2023/4, annual programme review exercises at the end of the academic

year;

- conveying views via your local administrator, the Eastbio team (Manager and Support Officer), a subcommittee or the student representatives;
- including supervisors to the monthly EastBio Newsletter mailing list (from 2024);
- encouraging supervisors to contact us directly if they have any concerns, recommendations, or complaints.

The programme responds to the analysis of feedback we receive and management steering but also, more broadly, to ongoing shifts in the regional and national doctoral provision, to our interactions with the funding body and to their priorities and constraints. We aim to remain ahead of the consensus around excellent practice in researcher development and, to this end, we reiterate the importance we assign to the proactive engagement of our supervisors with the EastBio doctoral programme.

[Programme survey](#)

[Eastbio contacts](#)

General email for Eastbio queries: enquiries@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk