**EastBio Partnership Placements**

**2025 Student Guide**

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# What is the PIPS scheme?

## General context

PIPS stands for Professional Internships for PhD Students and is a UKRI BBSR-funded scheme in support of funded PhD students. It is a mandatory programme requirement and amongst the EastBio contractual commitments to our funder. Your BBSRC studentship funds you for a total of 4 years, including the 3-month placement.

As mandatory part of the EastBio Training Programme, it aligns with our commitment to providing our students with support in the development of career-focused, professional and entrepreneurial skills. The scheme is open to all EastBio PhD students: (a) those who are carrying out a standard PhD project; (b) students on a tier-4 visa, either fully or with some adjustments; (c) optional for students on a studentship collaborative with a non-academic or industrial partner as they are required to do a placement at the premises of their non-academic partner, and (d) students associated with the EastBio training but not directly funded by EastBio; confirmation should be provided following the formal letter of offer by the host institution. Specific guidance for each category will be provided in this Guide.

**PIPS Exceptions**

All funded students are expected to carry out a placement as this is a mandatory and key requirement of the Training Programme. However, there may be circumstances where a revised completion plan, or even a waiver, may be necessary and will indeed be considered by EastBio and the relevant Academic lead(s). Circumstances include, for example, a grave change in the student’s personal circumstances (e.g. health of the student or acute change in their caring responsibilities), the PhD project, the intended programme outcome, or any other pressing and serious impact on the capacity of the student to complete an internship within the prescribed period of the three years. Concerns of that nature should be communicated as a matter of urgency to the EastBio Manager, who will discuss and review the rationale for the request for extension, exemption or revision of the PIPS requirement with the student, their PhD supervisor; formal approval of such requests will be confirmed by the Academic lead of the student’s institution.

**Definition**

PIPS refers to a 3-month (full-time equivalent) integrated student placement in a professional environment that is non-academic, during which the student works full-time on a project unrelated to their field of research (their PhD project). In other words,

* The organisation where you are to do your placement cannot be in an academic research setting; borderline cases (e.g. a start-up company affiliated with an academic institution), or any exceptions to the PIPS condition will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
* Students cannot carry out a research project in a clinical academic setting even if the field is unrelated to the student’s research; exceptions to this may be considered on a case-by-case basis under specific circumstances (usually under EDI policy).
* Students must choose a placement that is not related to your field of doctoral research.

**PIPS Terminology**

* ‘PIPS’ is used alongside the terms ‘internship’ and ‘placement’ throughout the Guide. The only exception is Collaborative (or CASE) Studentships that have different conditions.
* ‘PIPS provider’ or ‘PIPS host organisation’: Organisations that advertise a PIPS project or a placement opportunity, are considered for a placement by students, or provide a placement and host students.
* PIPS MOU refers to the mandatory form ‘Placement Agreement’ or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that records the details of the specific PIPS project as agreed by all parties - the student, the PhD and the PIPS supervisor, and the EastBio representative (Manager or Support Officer); the signed document is approved and shared with all parties, including the local administrator, prior to the start of the internship.

## Objective

Give students the opportunity to gain professional experience, professional skills other than research ones, insights into a different operational context and a new set of contacts in a non-academic setting before your graduation. The overall aim is to enhance your employability by helping you, as an early career researcher, to understand the context of your research, to get exposure to a range of career opportunities available after graduation, and to try out a professional role that is outwith your default lab/research work.

**Intended benefits to the student**

There are many ways in which you will benefit from the experience of an internship, which may include:

* Getting direct experience of working in a professional environment that does not directly relate to your PhD project.
* Making a positive contribution to the work of your host organisation by, for example, managing a non-research project, developing policy, undertaking a project in industry, integrating an R&D team, enthusing the next generation of researchers, and communicating science to a broader audience.
* Helping you to better understand the wider context of your research.
* Giving you the opportunity to consider the direction that your career might take after completing your PhD and broadening your awareness of areas where you can make a distinctive contribution using existing or developing further your professional skills.
* Building your confidence as a well-rounded individual, developing your critical, reflective and civic skills and awareness.
* Giving you a chance to see the ‘big picture’ of your research and making you, therefore, a better researcher.

In lay terms - and as former students have told us repeatedly - this is a great opportunity to do something practical, get a taste of something that you have been wanting to do besides research, safely discard (or reconsider) a second or third career option, test your commitment to a career in academia, explore work that albeit non-research related can have some meaningful connections with research outreach, impact or use, or, simply, get a quick sense of gratification by completing a meaningful project in a short period of time.

**Benefits to the host institution**

* building collaborations with non-academic partners and external shareholders;
* linking research with policymaking, business, advocacy organisations, or the wider public;
* demonstrating the wider context of research;
* promoting the excellence of the institution to prospective students and employers alike by managing a range of fulfilling internships;
* getting further evidence of researcher development opportunities.

## EastBio expectations

EastBio Placements are student-led. EastBio has a clear process and resources to facilitate and monitor progress, inform and support students and supervisors, and report outcomes to the funder. Within this frame, you the student has overall responsibility to source, plan and manage your PIPS according to your career goals and skills development. To do so, we strongly advise you to engage with:

* the EastBio process and available support
* the EastBio team: seek clarifications, call for a 1:1 meeting, request further help, report issues or delays, discuss alternatives, etc.
* the PhD supervisor (on PIPS timing, advice & feedback, recommendations)
* the prospective PIPS hosts
* Source suitable PIPS hosts and follow through
* Plan early, note key deadlines, and update as you go along; be aware of delays and setbacks and respond quickly, seek advice and help
* Carry out your placements before the start of your fourth year
* Provide feedback on your experience by (a) sharing a short blog with EastBio (this is via an onlin form), and (b) presenting in relevant activities, such as the annual EastBio Symposia (the 2025 Symposium will be on the Societal impact of research; Edinburgh, 3-4 June).

Your PhD supervisor can help you directly. After familiarising themselves with the PIPS scheme and its aims, they can share ideas and/or relevant contacts, act a regular point of contact and support during your PIPS but, also, support with specific steps, such as checking and signing your PIPS Plan and Agreement, or helping you with the risk assessment for a placement abroad. We have developed a [Supervisor Handbook](https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/eastbio-handbook) that we share by the Induction Day, to make sure that they receive clear information from EastBio about how to support your professional development during your PhD and across the training programme and professional placement. We also survey supervisors’ experiences and offers opportunities to speak in person with the EastBio Management and team (Induction & Symposia).

The success of the PIPS scheme also reflects on the programme’s success in terms of securing further funding applications: to this end, we ask you and your supervisor to share information with us and BBSRC on impacts from placements as well as by engaging with relevant sessions at Induction and Symposia events.

The continuation of your PhD funding after PhD month 37 is subject to meeting the UKRI BBSRC requirement to complete your internship before month 36. You must contact the EastBio team as soon as possible if you anticipate the need for an extension as this must be discussed and approved in advance!

# How is PIPS funded?

You will continue to receive your stipend during the placement as normal; the PIPS hosts are not expected to pay you a salary.

If the PIPS host chooses to pay you a salary that is equal or over the level of your current stipend, EastBio must pause your stipend for the period of your placement as per UKRI conditions. You continue to receive both stipend and salary if your placement is either abroad or located 50 miles or more from your term-time address at your institution’s location.

Standard placement costs should be covered from your annual RTSG (£5,230 per year, Y1-Y3)

You can apply to EastBio for additional funding of £1,000 maximum (for travel and/or accommodation) if your placement is abroad, or over 50 miles from your term-time address. Applications must be approved before your placement and the approved additional funds will be transferred to your RTSG where you can access these as normal.

We encourage students to discuss with their PIPS host in case they can also support financially some of the travel/accommodation expenses; this is especially the case with placements abroad.

PIPS hosts must cover all consumable costs involved in the PIPS project.

**PIPS Hardship**

From 2025 onwards, EastBio will consider providing financial support to students who experience significant adverse circumstances and hardship during their 3-month placement. These may include a sudden and unexpected change of their personal or family circumstances, accommodation challenges, or other set of circumstances that have a negative effect on their ability to continue their placement. Financial support will be provided should it be deemed that this will ensure the completion of the placement project. Depending on the gravity of the situation and after consultation with the student and, as necessary and appropriate, the PIPS and PhD supervisors, further appropriate options will be advised, including an interruption, postponement or cancellation of the placement itself. Details of this provision can be found on the PIPS Expenses form.

# PIPS duration, timing, format

* The PIPS total time must be the equivalent of 60 working days (12 working weeks) if on a full-time basis (35 hours per week) and the agreed dates must be shown clearly on the final PIPS MOU. PIPS should be taken as a continuous 12-weeks block, but a UK-based internship may be taken in several shorter blocks (minimum 2 days per week) as long as the total number of working days is 60. For instance, you can indicate on the form submitted to EastBio for approval an agreed arrangement for, say, “2 days per week over 8 months, with specific days such as, for example, Tuesdays and Wednesdays weekly, making up the required total of 60 days”. Other options such as carrying out the placement at different periods in the year are possible but must be discussed and agreed explicitly with the PIPS host organisation; consider that ad hoc arrangements may be more challenging to manage or carry less benefits for the student.
* EastBio requires that PIPS takes place between months 12 and 36 of your PhD so that it leaves your fourth year free for completing your research work and writing your PhD thesis. If you have specific concerns with this condition, please contact the EastBio Manager as early as possible to discuss acceptable adjustments.
* You may feel that your internship should be taken at a certain time of the year or at a particular stage of your PhD to avoid disruption to your project in the case, for example, of fieldwork or seasonal variations. You should tailor your internship to individual constraints so that it fits into the 12-to-36-month window we advise. Make sure that you explain this in your PIPS Plan so that we can review and approve plans promptly.

The format – and alternatives - of the PIPS depend on your PhD schedule and individual constraints, the capacity and requirements of the PIPS host organisation, and the type of project agreed. Any non-standard arrangement should be clearly described on the final PIPS MOU so that mutual expectations are transparent by all parties and a positive PIPS experience is ensured.

# PIPS location

* You will be expected to spend your internship working in the host organisation’s premises, although some travel to external sites and other organisations may be necessary. EastBio recognises that remote or hybrid PIPS may be, on some occasions, necessary due to circumstances related to the student’s personal circumstances (especially in case of a young family, additional caring responsibilities, managing ill health or a disability), the timing of the placement or the requirements of the project itself. Such remote or hybrid arrangements need to be discussed in detail and agreed by the student, the PIPS host organisation and the EastBio team and recorded on the PIPS MOU submitted for approval before the start of the placement.
* Internships could be hosted by more than one host organisation if this is considered appropriate. For example, students may wish to work on an outreach programme for a month in three different schools. However, all three different organisations will have to agree, and sign the same PIPS MOU, to be reviewed and approved by EastBio before the start of the placement.
* PIPS can be carried out abroad in line with your professional goals. However, students are advised to give this option careful thought given the additional logistical and financial requirements for this option. As described above, EastBio has limited additional funding. Students are to ask their prospective PIPS host for support with these costs or seek alternative sources of funding before committing to the PIPS project. By default, any extra costs associated with a placement abroad should be met by the PhD student (out of your RTSG) and/or host organisation.
* Students on a tier-4 visa may have specific restrictions on doing a professional placement abroad. You must, first, check that you are on a PhD programme ‘integrated with an internship’ and, secondly, seek the advice of the Immigration service of your institution before making further plans.

Before travelling overseas, it is essential that you and your PhD supervisor do the following:

* Complete all necessary Risk Assessment Procedures as prescribed by the local institution you are registered with.
	+ Submit a ‘Leave of Absence’ form according to the regulations of your academic institution.
	+ Fill in the EastBio ‘Placement Abroad Pre-departure Checklist’and submit to EastBio prior to your PIPS starting.

# Range of suitable PIPS

The objective of PIPS is to provide you with a unique, tailored experience chosen from a wide range of workplaces with training unavailable at your academic institution. Internships should ideally be discrete projects that are well planned and managed and can be completed within 3 months. They should provide experience at a level appropriate for a postgraduate student.During the internship you may wish to gain skills and experience in the following areas:

* Being customer-focused
* Influencing others
* Leading, developing and managing people
* Managing finances and resources
* Planning and organising
* Problem-solving and decision-making
* Pursuing professional excellence in a particular non-academic environment
* Thinking and acting strategically

Examples of different types or environments for PIPS include:

* Industry:
	+ a short desk-based research project in a non-academic setting
	+ review or analysis of manufacturing, processing, or production techniques
	+ non-research roles, such as marketing, publishing, or sales
	+ business development, or project management
* Legal companies
	+ Patent-related project
* Consultancy
	+ auditing projects
	+ (non-academic) research projects
* Teaching – in schools, using the Researchers in Residence scheme in the University of Edinburgh (https://www.ed.ac.uk/women-make-cities/researchers-in-residence), or through other similar mechanisms found in most partner institutions
* Policy sector – developing policy or working in a related setting, such as a government department or agency, local authority, non-departmental public body, professional association, think tank, charity (with clear links to scientific activities), or research funder
* Manufacturing
* Media industry – a wide variety of roles are possible here that help students understand the wider societal context of their research. Such internships could include working in science communication roles in a charity or other roles in:
	+ Press office
	+ Science publishing company

**Quick check of PIPS host’s suitability**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| If the answer to any of the questions below is ‘NO’, then the organisation you are considering does not meet with the BBSCR PIPS scheme criteria. | YES | NO |
| Does the PIPS you are considering fit with the ethos of the UKRI BBSRC goal “to help students understand the context of their research and to expose them to a range of opportunities available to them after they graduate”? |  |  |
| Can the PIPS host organisation provide you with the following:* A professional environment external to the academic institution?
* Mentorship/Supervision (non-academic) on a day-to-day basis?
* Desk space within physical work premises external to the academic institution? Or, in case of a remote PIPS (if approved), alternative appropriate structures to support home working?
* Willing to complete the PIPS MOU with necessary health and safety policy, insurance, and liability in place?
* Scheduled opportunities to interact with professionals from a non-academic background. The professionals that the PhD student will work with during this internship may include scientific writers, editors, client services, team members, creative team, senior leadership team, human resources; there may be some interaction with pharmaceutical client contacts, journal editors, admin staff, etc.
 |  |  |
| Does the PIPS project you are considering offer opportunities to develop professional skills and gain experience appropriate for a doctoral candidate? Below are some examples:* Being customer-focused;
* Influencing others;
* Leading, developing and managing people;
* Managing finances and resources;
* Planning and organising in a non-academic setting;
* Problem-solving and decision-making in a non-academic setting;
* Pursuing professional excellence in a particular non-academic environment;
* Thinking and acting strategically;
* Gaining commercial awareness.
 |  |  |
| Will I spend a total of 12 weeks (or totaling 60 days) on this placement project? |  |  |

# PIPS paperwork

**Mandatory forms:**

1. PIPS Planning form

To be completed by the end of September of your first year and submitted to [placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](http://www.shellstep.org.uk/) for approval

1. PIPS Memorandum of Understanding (PIPS MOU)

To be completed once the intended PIPS project and plan have been refined in close collaboration between the student, the PIPS host organisation and the PhD supervisor. It is the student’s responsibility to return the completed form, signed by all parties to [placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/eastbio-dtp-committees) for EastBio approval before the placement can begin. Students who begin their internship without previous formal approval of the PIPS MOU, shared will parties, will not be insured and PIPS cannot be retrospectively approved.

1. PIPS Feedback forms, one by the student and one by the PIPS host organisation, to be submitted to [placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01087-9) once the internship is completed.
2. BBSRC frequently requests PIPS case studies or impact examples so we may contact those who have completed their PIPS separately and request a statement for sharing with the funder.

**Optional**

1. PIPS Expenses form for up to £1,000 for travel and accommodation on a competitive basis - optional,to be approved by EastBioprior to starting your placement;
2. PIPS Abroad Pre-departure Checklist (for overseas PIPS)

All the forms are reviewed annually and published on the EastBio website at [http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/professional-internships-phd-students-pips](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01361-w) ; we aim to complete all relevant guidance and forms before the EastBio Placements Q&A session (early February).

# B. How to manage your placement

EastBio has designed the PIPS scheme around three key principles:

* **Student-centred and student-led**: the scheme helps you further to develop your confidence and capacity around your professional development; your capacity to collect and process information, manage a project from start to finish, assess your knowledge needs and development trajectory, pursue (and reflect upon) career goals. We aim to support you to develop your internship ideas, pursue and plan an internship that is meaningful to you within the scheme’s remit. It is the responsibility of the student to plan and carry out a professional placement according to the timeline, frame and guidelines provided by EastBio.
* **Support to students by their PhD supervisor**: EastBio communicates early our expectations to supervisors. They are invited to the Induction and the PIPS Q&A session and are expected to work together with students, engage with and help them to build confidence to make decisions about internship opportunities and agree on the appropriate timing of an internship within the overall PhD schedule (between years 1 and 3 of the PhD).
* **Support by the EastBio team**: The PIPS scheme is administered by the EastBio team - the partnership Manager and Support Officer - on behalf of the EastBio Management Group. The team provides students with comprehensive support from start to finish. We also communicate feedback, progress and concerns related to the PIPS scheme to the local academic leads (members of the EastBio Management Group). Our support can be summarised under two headings, process and resources, and is complemented with clear wellbeing support.

# EastBio Support

**Process**:

* PIPS Y1 Q&A session run by the EastBio Manager (early February), mandatory for new students, open to supervisors – aim to share detailed information about placements, timeline, expectations, make support visible, answer questions, respond to concerns
* Student presentations, part of the PIPS Y1 Q&A session (early February), open to all students – opportunity to interact with fellow students who have completed their placement and discuss experiences, insights and tips
* Y2 autumn drop-in session, with student volunteers – opportunity to get clarifications, further input, gain more confidence and finalise your PIPS plan (due end of September)
* A clear PIPS timeline
* Option to request 1:1 meeting with the EastBio team for individual support
* Frequent email reminders from the EastBio team, requests for updates to monitor student progress
* EastBio will apply flexibilities if individual circumstances require it (with BBSRC approval)

**Resources:**

* The EastBio Placements Guide (reviewed annually) - this is shared with Y1 students in advance of the Induction Day so you have access to the information very early on and can consult, discuss with your PhD supervisor, and prepare questions for the PIPS Q&A session.
* PIPS Q&A session slides, video recordings shared with all Y1 after the session
* Separate Guidance for visa-holding students
* Placement forms (PIPS Plan, MOU, expenses, feedback) to ensure due diligence in terms of the project feasibility and plan (reviewed annually)
* EastBio templates & checklists: How to approach a prospective PIPS host; PIPS Log; Placement abroad checklist
* Past PIPS Experiences <https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/training/placements/past-pips-experiences> where you can see the full range of placements students have completed or filter through your own area of interest.
* Separate guidance for prospective PIPS hosts
* EastBio transferable skills training (resilience, narrative CVs, science communication, making the most of your final year), and local options we encourage you to also take before and after your placement to help you manage the transition challenges
* Placement sessions at the EastBio Symposia where you can get insights from other students
* After discussion with the EastBio Manager, funds can be made available to those who encounter considerable hardship during their PIPS.

We stress the importance of good communication between all parties at all stages of the planning process, and of staying in touch with the team during your PIPS to pre-empt any issues as they arise.

## Wellbeing support

Starting a placement is not unlike starting a new job so we want to help make this a positive experience throughout:

* Please engage properly with our process. It clarifies expectations from all partners from a very early stage.
* Consider relevant training prior to and upon return from your placement to help with transition
* Keep a daily log during your placement to record, process and self-reflect on your journey through the placement (incl. new learning, skills, contacts and achievements, areas of personal growth or any issues you may encounter along the way). Use this to feed into a broad impact statement/narrative of your PIPS project.
* If not in place, request regular review meetings with your PIPS supervisor to enable adjustments on problematic processes that can be resolved by discussion
* Remember that placements are meant to expose you to skills other than research-based so embrace such opportunities as they arise
* Seek input from your PhD supervisor on managing the relationship with your PIPS supervisor during the placement in a professional manner, especially if there are significant differences of approach, challenges or tensions
* If challenges arise early on in your PIPS, do not ignore them! After discussing with the EastBio team and your PhD supervisor, you can discuss alternatives, request to pause your placement, seek adjustments to the plans made - or at worst, discontinue it - to allow you to deal with the difficulty.
* Let us know of your experience and views so that we can review and improve on our support.

## Wellbeing contacts

We strongly encourage students to stay in touch with EastBio (and/or your PhD supervisor) at all PIPS stage and never hesitate to seek support as and when you need it. Useful contacts that you can consider depending on the nature of challenge you face are below:

* placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk (checked by the EastBio Manager and/or Support Officer)
* Escalation route via the EastBio sub-committee, for instance the Training and Development Committee; details at https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/contact-us/eastbio-dtp-committees
* edi@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk - separate email for the EDI Student reps if you want not to contact the EastBio placements team but prefer a student rep to discuss with you and convey your views to the team or the Management
* eastbio.mhfa@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk - separate email that is accessed by the EastBio Mental Health First Aiders’ group
* https://tinyurl.com/4s5wsvb8 - option to submit a complaint about your placement via the EastBio complaint form. This will be accessed by the EastBio Manager and/or Support Officer who will escalate to either the local academic lead or the Management Group depending on your preferences.

If you're facing a crisis during your placement, contact Maria.Filippakopoulou@ed.ac.uk asap. It may be that some urgent action is called so please let us know of the circumstances.

# PIPS Stages

## Before your PIPS

To start planning:

* Reflect and review on the professional skills you would like to develop during your placement. When you explore potential host organisations, try and match such skills with an organisation that has a good track record in offering relevant opportunities in the area of your interest. Be aware of the benefits of developing a self-reflection practice as part of your daily work routine - this will help you to sharpen your intentions, optimise your plans, and set clear directions for future action. Most partner institutions will have relevant resources made available via their Careers or Employment services; indicatively, see the University of Edinburgh Careers team Reflection Toolkit at [https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection](http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2014/11/20/ask-the-expert-what-other-jobs-can-bioscience-researchers-and-phd-students-consider-if-they-want-to-leave-academia) (sign-in required).
* EastBio will regularly circulate internship opportunities directly and via the website at <https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/training/placements/current-pips-opportunities> and our monthly Newsletter.
* Approach your local Careers Advice Service to research ideas on organisations, environments or sectors you would like to pursue your PIPS in (industry, policy, government, NGO, legal, charity, outreach, etc.), what opportunities exist, what support there is to plan successfully.
* Network to gain useful information that will guide your choices:
	+ Use your personal support networks -- your PhD supervisory team, other trusted colleagues, lab members, PGR advisors, friends or family – to seek input or recommendations they may be able to make, or for a reality-check on your thinking;
	+ consult the EastBio team or other PhD students who you know may have completed a placement and seek their input, advice or any tips. Aim to seek input at a time when you have a set of ideas based on your own priorities so that you are not unduly influenced by other people’s preferences, goals and aspirations. You can approach students who have completed their PIPS and can be approached at the Y1 Placements Q&A session (early February), the Y2 drop-in session (early September), the EastBio annual Symposium (early June); you can also browse shared experiences at https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/training/placements/current-pips-opportunities.
	+ Pursue any connections your supervisor(s) may have that could be useful for your ambitions.
	+ Book one-to-one time with your local Careers Advisor to discuss your PIPS ideas and other suitable opportunities existing at that time.
	+ Search online for further options by using LinkedIn, or established Internship schemes (see further resources list, below).
* Attend a CV briefing session to prepare a skills-based CV which you can tailor for your PIPS applications or exploratory contacts; consider attending local training on professional skills that you are missing in preparation for a placement, such as project or time management, interview coaching, business or entrepreneurial training, pitching, leadership skills, etc.
* Identify an area/sector of interest (or two!) and a minimum of three names of host organisations per sector, in which you would like to carry out your PIPS. You may be guided by a specific professional you admire, an area of activity or a goal – all are valuable guides in your planning.
* Agree the approximate timing of your PIPS with your PhD supervisor as early as possible.
* We encourage you to start planning early as experience shows that it may take a while to secure an offer of an internship. Note that delays are very normal but still have an effect on your overall plans.
* By the end of your first year (end of September), you are to complete and submit to EastBio for approval the mandatory PIPS Planning form – this is simply a record of what you think of your placement. EastBio checks that this fits with the scheme’s criteria and the suitability of the host organisations on the form and will either approve the form or ask you to address any concerns identified. You will not be asked to resubmit your plan if there are changes assuming that these do not change the main direction of your plan as approved initially (email us so that we’re aware of any changes in your plans).
* You must have received approval of your PIPS plan by EastBio before making contact with any of the potential PIPS host organisations on your form. We assume that you will proceed but only after the formal approval making sure that area and organisation(s) are eligible for the BBSRC scheme.

### Next steps after your Plan approval

#### Step 1 – Securing a placement offer

* Before contacting a potential PIPS host organisation, make sure they have been approved by EastBio (you will have received an approved form with comments, as appropriate).
* Approach the prospective host organisation by sending a formal, succinct email to introduce yourself. Consider using a template email we have developed on how to contact a potential PIPS host for the first time: <https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/training/placements/information-current-students>. Attach the EastBio PIPS brochure for PIPS hosts, and/or a link to the webpage [http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/information-organisations](http://www.fledglings.net) that explains more about the scheme. Also attach your tailored CV and a brief statement to demonstrate your skills and experience, your interest (and/or experience) in the organisation and your motivation to help with a project they may be running. Be clear about what area you would like to work on, your preferred timeframe and how flexible you are. You should ensure that you explain clearly what EastBio expects of you and of the host organisation during your internship; refer them to EastBio if there are any doubts about mutual expectations and ask for a team member to join any meetings you may have agreed with the potential host. Follow up the email if you have not had a response within a week, either with another email or a phone call. If the organisation agrees, you will then need to explore a suitable internship project with them that offers an opportunity for you to develop your professional skills, the role of the designate PIPS mentor/supervisor, the format of the 3-month, etc. Placements must start after month 12 of your PhD.
* Follow our tips on [interacting with host organisations](#PIPSInteracting) at all times when liaising with the host organisation. If you have additional support requirements, EastBio can help you liaise with the host organisation to discuss the support available. Please note that whilst we can make your host organisation aware of the individual support you receive at your academic institution, we cannot guarantee that every host will be able to provide the same level of support/adjustments.
* If you have difficulties securing an internship after multiple contacts: contact EastBio for further advice and recommendations; seek advice from your PhD supervisor(s) and the local Careers Office; be prepared to explore your second or third PIPS option, as recorded on your PIPS Planning form. Do not be despondent if your top choice is proving harder to achieve and be aware that some industries are more competitive than others.
* Section B of the PIPS Planning form at this stage can help discussions with a potential PIPS host to negotiate a tailored internship project. This section, once completed, is a useful blueprint for the Placement Agreement (MOU), the final step before you are ready to go on your PIPS.

#### Step 2 – Completing the PIPS Agreement

* When the scope, nature and details of the project are agreed, fill in the PIPS Agreement and make sure it is signed by all three relevant parties (yourself, the PIPS Host organisation representative and your PhD supervisor). Be aware that some of the sections need to be completed by the PIPS host directly (e.g. IP, Health & Safety, Insurance details, etc.) so you must aim to get their input early to avoid delays. Once the form is completed, submit the signed copy to [placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](http://www.e4s.co.uk/search/internship-jobs) for approval. We aim to review MOUs received within ten working days and share the confirmed copy with all parties, including the local administrative or academic lead, for their information.
* Once the PIPS Agreement is formally approved by EastBio, you can start your PIPS at the dates agreed with your PIPS provider and your PhD supervisor. Final step is to request an Absence of Leave from your host academic institution so that you can carry out the placement full-time.
* We ask students who are on PIPS not to attend any training or events associated with their PhD (EastBio training included) to allow them to focus on the PIPS project fully and make the best of their 3 months on their project. We are aware from past experiences that it can truly challenging and counterproductive to attempt to work on both the PhD and the PIPS projects at the same time. Please email EastBio if there is agreement between you and your supervisory team about a specific training (or other research-related) commitment that you need to do during your PIPS.
* Be aware of local support & resources available to you as you transition from the lab to the PIPS host organisation’s premises, and vice-versa. Part of your preparation for your placement involves exploring such support and identifying existing channels and sources of support for when you need to use it, for instance:
	1. EastBio transferable skills training (resilience, science communication, narrative CV)
	2. project/time management, business/enterprise skills, commercialisation, specific methods you anticipate will be required, etc.
	3. training on writing a covering letter, preparing for an interview, as well as self-care, self-advocacy
	4. For instance, the University of Edinburgh has provided the following resources at https://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/staff/making-transitions-personal.
* Should any aspect of the agreed and approved PIPS MOU change significantly – including following an unforeseen logistical challenge, e.g. in terms of travel or accommodation - please speak to the EastBio team and your PhD supervisor without any delay. Our goal is for you to get the best PIPS experience possible in line with what was agreed so any major change may indicate a bigger issue down the line. It is therefore important that you communicate openly and timely with us and/or the PhD and PIPS supervisors so that measures can be taken, including a pause to the internship, a postponement or a new agreement.
* After discussing with your PIPS supervisor, write and save a brief plan, or to-do-list for returning to your PhD project; this may include a provisional timeline with key actions, contacts, meetings and training to carry out upon your return. You may also consider whether you would like to request some annual leave to take between the end of your PIPS and the return to your PhD to allow you a smooth transition.

## During your PIPS

* Seek out ways of being enterprising, helpful, using your initiative, being assertive, networking and reporting about your experience.
* Capture your PIPS experience, by keeping a learning diary, or even blogging about it. EastBio has developed a PIPS log that you can use for that purpose, amended to suit your working practices (available at <https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/training/placements/information-current-students>). Consult the Reflection Toolkit referred to above or any similar resources. Consider any learning from your PIPS project not merely on its own merit but also in relation to your standard research work; how is it different? How does it build or interlocks with your research skills? Recording your experience dynamically through your internship not only saves you time when we will ask you to submit your PIPS feedback but also deepens the value of the experience and your capacity to self-reflect as part of your overall professional skills. Some partner institutions – e.g. the University of Dundee - may require a short PIPS narrative as part of your PhD thesis. A PIPS narrative can also help you articulate the impact of your PIPS work that may prove helpful in several other types of engagement during the rest of your PhD and beyond. We believe that student researcher development includes the ability to compose a personal impact statement, whether on their research or associated work in your chosen sector.
* Recognise if something is wrong, discuss early with your PIPS Supervisor, your PhD supervisor(s) and the EastBio team to seek advice, identify ways to manage challenges and ensure that the outcome will be overall positive and to your best interests. EastBio is committed to supporting on-the-programme students and make every effort possible to ensure continuity of such support during the PIPS duration. To do so we need to know how your experience is developing and be able to intervene should things fail to go as planned.

## After your PIPS

EastBio will contact you in the final weeks of your PIPS with a reminder about the steps to complete PIPS-related requirements. This is a short outline:

* You must complete a short feedback report for EastBio on your experience (via an online form) that includes a summary to be uploaded on the EastBio website [http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/information-current-students](http://www.thebigchoice.com/) and broader feedback on the PIPS scheme, your support by the PIPS host organisation and the team at the different stages of planning. The aim of the report is to capture information on your PIPS placement, including key outputs, outcomes and impacts from your placement, and to assess the extent to which your placement gave you the opportunity to develop further skills, make new contacts or explore a certain career pathway. We share collated - and anonymised - feedback with two of the EastBio sub-committees, the Training & Development and the Industry Engagement committees to allow the EastBio Management Group to review the scheme in their annual meeting at the end of the year (usually at the Annual Symposia, early June). We may also request specific impact case studies for our Annual Report to the BBSRC or separate such initiatives; we will share such cases with your explicit consent. For that purpose, we will also ask you to check with the PIPS host organisation for any confidentiality clauses that restrict public use of any outcomes resulting from your PIPS project.

We stress that there needs to be frequent opportunities for communicating concerns about your PIPS project as soon as they arise so that there is adequate opportunity for corrective action. Be aware of this need and stay in touch with EastBio during your PIPS and your PhD supervisor. For PIPS to be a genuine development opportunity, expectations and obligations must be met by all parties.

In cases of serious allegations against the PIPS Host organisation involved proven risk to the student’s health and wellbeing, we may escalate to the local academic lead and/or the Management Group with a view to agreeing on an action plan that will highlight corrective actions and further review and support mechanisms. Following consultation with the professional services at the University of Edinburgh and other partner institutions, we reserve the right to use the student evidence to investigate such allegations and set up a veto mechanism for long-term placements with that provider.

* Ask your PIPS Supervisor at the host organisation to complete the short EastBio Feedback form and submit it to [placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](https://www.brightnetwork.co.uk/internships/) (via an online form). This is not to assess your performance during your PIPS but to enable us to gauge the overall impact of the scheme and, also, to maintain a relationship with various PIPS providers who wish to host more students. Should there be any constructive advice to the student personally, we may pass this discreetly to the student. Should there be any major concerns, we will try to get more information from the host organisation and the student, as necessary, with a view to establishing whether there have been any gaps in the overall support, communication and review, guidance and delivery of the process for future learning.
* You are expected to give a 7/10-minute live presentation at the online EastBio Placement Q&A Session(early February – mandatory for first-year students, supervisors invited too). If you are not available to attend this session, you will be asked to send the team a pre-recorded video and be approachable for any questions on your video by other students. The presentation is a critical reflection on your PIPS experience, the skills you developed, and any insights on how the experience has influenced your current career aspirations. You may also share advice on the planning of your PIPS based on any learning from it. Other events you may also be invited to present on your PIPS are the EastBio Annual Symposia (early June, in person), the EastBio Induction (early October, in person), the Research Experience Placements (REP) Induction for undergraduate students and other ad hoc events, jointly with former EastBio students and student reps or other UKRI BBSRC partnerships.
* With an eye to the future, also consider to do the following:
	+ Consider taking a refresher course on academic skills or methods, writing-up, career skills, etc. for your return to your PhD project.
	+ Update your CV to reflect your recent PIPS experience.
	+ Maintain and further develop your newly formed networks.
	+ Explore opportunities within your PIPS host organisations for future collaboration, such as research fellowships, bids, postdoctoral positions or employment.

# PIPS guidance for overseas students

**General**

Since the UKRI 2020 decision to open doctoral partnership programmes to international students, the EastBio partner institutions have separately proceeded to approve revised PhD programmes with integrated internships. The aim was to enable full access to PIPS by tier-4 visa holders who would otherwise be constrained due to their visa regulations. We have, consequently, updated our advice for a small cohort of our funded international students with no access to such integrated PhD programme. At the at the time of publicising the PIPS Guide 2025, some partner institutions were issuing separate advice to students. If you are unsure of your access, please email [placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/work-experience-and-internships).

Funded students with international fees status and no access to a PhD programme integrated with an internship are restricted by the terms of their visa to the following work placement conditions:

* Maximum of 20 hours placement work per week during term time
* Part-time Placement to be strictly within UK
* Placement to be carried out alongside their PhD project

Under these conditions, EastBio proposes a revised PIPS approach that can be summarised below:

1. students must first check their visa details/restrictions by contacting their local Immigration service
2. students must then check with their local graduate school or support administrator to confirm the PhD programme they were formally matriculated in (to establish whether their programme is integrated with an internship or not)
3. students to discuss with their PhD supervisor and the local PGR advisor and – ideally, in communication with the EastBio Manager - explore the option of a part-time placement within this limited frame before reaching a final decision.
4. Students to communicate the outcome of the discussion to the EastBio Manager if they have not included them in that discussion.

We ask you to consider the following criteria before making any decision:

1. the intended benefits of the amended placement for you the student;
2. the implications for your PhD progress and plan;
3. your own professional development needs, and
4. any personal impacts (e.g. family and caring responsibilities, health or disability management, etc.).

EastBio will support students in their decision-making and will apply flexibility to the level required by them for the opportunity to be genuinely beneficial for your personal development and career goals. All relevant EastBio expectations regarding the timeline, process and forms will be adjusted according to the specific circumstances of each student on a case-by-case. EastBio also expects that the student academic supervisor will be supportive and provide them with suitable recommendations, guidance, and advice.

## Options

After the EastBio Placements Q&A (early February), funded visa-holding students are asked to consider the following options when planning to carry out an (adjusted) EastBio placement, including a PIPS exemption request:

1. **Option 1 - Up to 20 hours[[1]](#footnote-1) per week during term time (per 7-day week) on a part-time basis[[2]](#footnote-2) and with the agreement of the academic supervisor (in writing)**. Details as follows:
	1. The project/placement will be unrelated to the student’s PhD project.
	2. No possibility to do a placement abroad as this may lead to a breach of visa regulations.
	3. Recommended minimum duration of one month; no maximum duration but, for reference, please note that the PIPS scheme is 3-month long which may not be suitable under the terms of this adjusted framework.
	4. The student should be employed by (have signed an employment contract with) the host organisation even though the placement can be either paid or unpaid;
	5. The student continues to be in receipt of their PhD stipend and is also eligible to apply for the additional EastBio PIPS funds of a max of £1,000 (towards travel and/or accommodation).
	6. Types of work *not* allowed include free-lance, business work, self-employment, consultancy, entertainment, sports.
	7. During their placement, the student should continue meeting the reporting requirements stipulated by their visa (that is to say, demonstrating engagement with their supervisor, in writing).
	8. EastBio sets no restriction as to when such placement should be carried out within the PhD cycle and students can, for instance, consider doing a placement in their fourth year assuming this is not detrimental to their research schedule. EastBio should receive details and updates of the student’s plans in advance and be kept informed of key steps during the planning. One-to-one catch-up sessions with the EastBio Manager are strongly encouraged.
2. **Option 2 - Full-time placement with an industrial partner** – in this option, the EastBio PhD studentship will be converted to an industrial (Collaborative) studentship, within which visa-holding students are permitted to do a full BBSRC PIPS on the understanding that the placement is integral part of the PhD project. Terms that apply in this case can be found at [http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/EastBio-case-studentships](http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/eastbio-case-studentships). Please email placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk to request the relevant forms if you have secured a collaboration with a non-academic partner. Under this option, a placement outwith UK is permissible under the visa terms and conditions. Your academic supervisor(s) may be able to advise on potential industrial collaborators who could host student placements. There is flexibility in the terms of the placements under this option, e.g. this may be a longer placement than the 3 months stipulated by the PIPS Scheme as this would relate to the project requirements. Maximum duration of a Collaborate placement is 28 months.
3. **Option 4 - Micro-internships** (one or multiple) consisting of 2 days per week for a maximum of 8 weeks in total. For a case study of such a micro-internship (5 days) with the Scottish Government (UoE student), see [https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/careers/insights/case-studies/insights-in-person-steve](https://80000hours.org/job-board/). For benefits to interns, also see this article: https://insights.ise.org.uk/work-experience-internships/blog-5-reasons-why-more-employers-are-running-micro-placements/
4. **Option 5 - Request** **an exemption from PIPS with a detailed justification** based on your assessment of our circumstances. These may, for instance, include limited capacity, intended but limited PIPS benefits, or negative impacts on the progress of the PhD project outweighing any rewards to the student. The EastBio Manager will first discuss this request with you and will then forward it to the academic lead of your institution for review and final decision (details of academic leads at <https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/contact-us/programme-contacts>.

Students on a tier-4 visa must submit the revised Placement form to EastBio with their preferred option once they reach a decision on their placement by their second year. We advise you to take some time to make sure that any decision you will make works from you and is based on evidence and an assessment of all pros and cons. You may want to discuss this with he EastBio and we’ll check with our students regularly for updates.

Useful contacts:

* EastBio Placements mailbox: [placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](http://www.thebigchoice.com/)
* UoE Student Immigration service: [Contact us | The University of Edinburgh](https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/immigration/contact-us)
* University of Stirling: studentimmigration@stir.ac.uk

# Guidance for Collaborative placements

Industry-linked Collaborative Studentships (CASE studentships) are collaborative research projects between EastBio academics and industrial/non-academic partners. These are developed through close collaboration between the two partners and in consultation with the local Industry/Business Engagement Team of the host academic institution where the academic supervisor is based at. EastBio reviews and advertises Collaborative projects and recruits students that are the best fit for the PhD project. From an early stage in the recruitment, there are clear expectations regarding: (a) the project’s alignment with the industrial challenge or opportunity it addresses; (b) the project’s outcomes, both in terms of the non-academic partner’s requirements and the recruited student’s professional development; (c) the student onboarding, frequency of meetings between the recruited student and the non-academic supervisors, type of resources & expertise provided from the industrial partner, etc., and (d) risks to successful completion and mitigating actions. Finally, the project describes the commitments of the non-academic partner in financial terms and in relation to the anticipated date and length of the student’s mandatory placement at the non-academic partner premises. Following the successful recruitment of a student to the project, the academic and non-academic partners are expected to confirm the CASE Agreement that underpins their collaboration regarding the PhD project by emailing the EastBio team a copy of the completed and signed agreement.

Students working on collaborative projects benefit from the full EastBio training programme in addition to time spent on the premises of the non-academic partner as described in the PhD project proposal and resulting CASE Agreement. We ask that students are presented with the details so that they get plenty of opportunity to shape and further develop the Collaborative project when they start their PhD.

Students on a Collaborative studentship are expected to carry out a placement at the non-academic partner of a longer duration than the PIPS -- from 3 minimum to 18 months maximum -- and on a project linked with their PhD project. The details of the project are based on initial conversations between the academic and the non-academic supervisors, captured by the advertised project, and developed with engagement from the student as soon as they join the programme. EastBio expects to receive a signed copy of the Collaborative Placement Agreement (MOU) once all the details of the project are finalised.

Although EastBio recognizes that CASE placement plans obey primarily the requirements of the project and the non-academic partner’s relevant operational processes, we still expect to see a plan in place. The expectation results from the commitments confirmed in the PhD project proposal as aligned with the UKRI BBSRC Terms and Conditions regarding collaborative studentships; reporting on the progress of these placements is part of the EastBio reporting requirements to the BBSRC. Students who complete their Collaborative Placement are expected to present on their experience at the Placements Q&A session for first-year students (early February) but also other EastBio events, particularly the Annual Impact Symposia running on alternate years (next one is scheduled for early June 2025).

Students on Collaborative studentships can apply to EastBio for additional expenses should the non-academic partner not commit financial support for the purpose of travel and accommodation. The non-academic partner is liable to cover all project costs during the placement (e.g. consumables), including in-kind support.

Although rare, students on Collaborative studentships have the option of pursuing a PIPS in addition to their CASE placement with their PhD supervisor’s agreement and on the condition that the additional time required for the placement will not impact their PhD progress negatively. Approval of plans is discussed with the EastBio Manager who consults with both the student and the PhD supervisor.

# Further resources

Information on suitable PIPS providers can be identified via several routes, primarily at your local Careers Advice Service:

* Institution of Aberdeen: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/
* Institution of Dundee: [http://www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/](http://targetjobs.co.uk/)
* Institution of Edinburgh: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers](https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection)
* Institution of St Andrews: [http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/careers/](http://targetjobs.co.uk/graduate-jobs/default.aspx)
* Institution of Stirling: [https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/careers/](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/)
* SRUC: [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/study-with-us/student-life/student-support/career-services/](http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/professional-internships-phd-students-pips)
* Moredun Research Institute: https://moredun.org.uk/careers
* James Hutton Institute: https://hutton.current-vacancies.com/Careers/JHI%20VSP%20-%20External-2065

You can also explore ideas and access potential providers though your PhD supervisor(s) and local network of colleagues, fellow students (EastBio or not), lab members, and friends. We encourage contact with fellow students who have completed their placement, other UKRI partnerships, via the website at http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/information-current-students, and the Industry Engagement Committee at [http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/EastBio-dtp-committees](http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/information-organisations), panels with former EastBio students with careers in industry, the annual online Q&A Session (early February), and other key events (annual symposia, induction, etc.).

EastBio will regularly update PIPS opportunities submitted to us from BBSRC, our stakeholders and organisations that have hosted EastBio students in the past either via a direct email, through the website and the monthly Newsletter. Please share with us opportunities that you are aware of in partner institutions!

## Advertised Internships

The following companies collate placement vacancies and allow you to search and compare them. You may need to register on their sites to access the internship vacancies but none of these listed companies charge students for their services.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of website** | **Brief description of website** | **Address of website** |
| **Prospects** | An interface of the Prospects job search tool specifically for placement vacancies. | [https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/work-experience-and-internships](https://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/staff/making-transitions-personal)  |
| [**Student Employment Services**](https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection) | Dedicated placement recruitment and employing agency. | [http://www.studentemploymentservices.co.uk/](https://insights.ise.org.uk/work-experience-internships/blog-5-reasons-why-more-employers-are-running-micro-placements/) |
| [**Fledglings**](https://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/) |  Jobsite for placements and work experience vacancies.  | [http://www.fledglings.net/](https://moredun.org.uk/careers)  |
| **Shell Step** | A national scheme that organises project-based work experience opportunities in SMEs. | [http://www.step.org.uk/](http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2015/02/19/ask-the-expert-how-do-i-figure-out-what-value-i-have-to-offer-non-academic-employers)  |
| [**RateMyPlacement**](https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/careers/) | Placement and internship vacancies. There are also 65,000+ reviews from students who have completed placements and internships, covering the role, organisation and social life. These are really helpful for students to read when deciding where to apply for a placement, internship, insight or virtual experience - to make sure it’s the right fit for them. | https://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/  |
| [**Employment4students**](http://www.fledglings.net/) | Placement and internship vacancies. | [http://www.e4s.co.uk/search/internship-jobs](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers)  |
| [**Target Jobs**](https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/careers/insights/case-studies/insights-in-person-steve) | This has work-experience/internship as a specific search criterion. | [http://targetjobs.co.uk/](http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/information-current-students)  |
| [**The Big Choice**](http://www.e4s.co.uk/search/internship-jobs) | This has work placement as a specific search criteria. | http://www.thebigchoice.com/  |
| **Top Internships** | A dedicated global placement search and compare site. |  globalplacement.com/en/top-internships  |
| **Bright Network** | Internships, industry placements. | [https://www.brightnetwork.co.uk/internships/](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Work_experience/Search_placements/p%21eigaLkL)  |
| **80.000 Hours** | Jobs tackling the world’s most pressing problems (including internships) | [https://80000hours.org/job-board/](http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2015/02/19/ask-the-expert-how-do-i-figure-out-what-value-ihave-to-offer-non-academic-employers)  |

Remember, all externally identified placements will need to be approved by EastBio to ensure the proposed PIPS fits with the UKRI BBSRC criteria.

**Tips on interacting with a potential PIPS host organisation**

As a student funded by UKRI BBSSRC, you are responsible for conducting yourself professionally in all your interactions with prospective or actual PIPS host organisations and for maintaining or facilitating an excellent working relationship between yourself, the PIPS host organisation and your academic institution. In reverse, please contact the EastBio team if any significant concerns about a prospective or actual PIPS host has arisen in your interactions with them. Keeping the team informed may make the difference between a smooth internship and a wasted opportunity!

If you feel that you may benefit from some advice in terms of professional conduct in the workplace, you may contact your academic institution’s Careers Service which may provide:

* one-to-one discussions with a Careers Advisor;
* preparation of a skills-based CV and a tailored covering letter;
* interview practice sessions;
* useful workshops such as ‘Finding an internship’, ‘Introduction to work-based internships’, ‘Business etiquette’, ‘Managing the transition to the Workplace’, etc.

Only begin discussions with any PIPS host organisation after:

1. You have agreed the timing of your internship with your PhD supervisor, and
2. Your PIPS Planning form has been approved by the EastBio team.

Consider using the **EastBio contact template** if you are approaching a prospective PIPS host for the first time: the template is found at:

<https://biology.ed.ac.uk/eastbio/training/placements/information-current-students>

Here are a few quick pointers for upcoming meetings aimed to either develop an internship idea or to prepare an application for an internship vacancy advertised by the host organisation:

Before the meeting, you should:

* check with your PhD supervisor(s) and the Careers Service that your proposed PIPS internship ideas are suitable to share with the PIPS host organisation;
* reflect upon any discussions you might already have had about the scope of your internship project and how you would plan to approach it; join the meeting prepared to talk about this;
* undertake some background reading or research about the PIPS host organisation, investigate some ideas for your PIPS project, and join the meeting prepared to talk about this;
* if the meeting regards an advertised internship vacancy, read carefully through the internship vacancy specification to refresh your memory on the project that was outlined;
* make a list of questions you would like to ask your PIPS host organisation contact (prospective PIPS Supervisor) about the organisation and the internship project you will be undertaking; for this, please read the EastBio forms to familiarise yourself with what is expected of them; don’t hesitate to check with the EastBio team if anything is unclear.
* If helpful, consider also inviting a representative from the EastBio team to join and help with procedural questions or further support to you for that meeting.

During the meeting you should:

* be prepared to talk about yourself, your academic interests, any previous work experience, your professional/research ambitions and your general interest in the proposed internship;
* bring along a skills-based CV for your host organisation contact/supervisor to take away;
* bring along your Planning form whose Section B may help guide discussions around a tailored internship project; that will help your host organisation to identify what they are expected to provide for you;
* bring along a copy of the PIPS Agreement form and agree its contents together, if appropriate at that time. The MOU sections are expected to fit with the needs of the academic institution, the PIPS host organisation and you the PhD intern, and must, therefore, be recorded, signed and approved by all parties involved;
* keep notes during the meetings to capture any ad hoc arrangements, any challenging issue or a decision to be confirmed at a later stage; we may ask you for an update on the progress so this will be helpful to have in hand;
* be prepared to ask your host organisation contact/supervisor to clarify their expectations of you; remember that mutual expectations must be made explicit and stay transparent for all involved;
* remember to ask the host organisation whether they may be able to help with any travel or accommodation costs of this placement, if applicable in this case. Explain how the funding of the PIPS work, what is mandatory for the PIPS host organisation during the placement (in-kind support and consumable costs) and what is optional (support of additional costs, e.g. travel and accommodation);
* clarify anything about the internship project you are unsure of or that seems vague, and discuss any additional training or support you’ll seek for this.
* Stress that your funder expects clear and regular communication between all parties so that the placement will be a positive and rewarding experience and any issues will be addressed appropriately.
* If you have invited an EastBio representative to the meeting, you can separately discuss with them recommendations in support of securing the internship.

**After the meeting** you will be expected to email your host organisation contact/supervisor to confirm the meeting’s main discussion points. If you have been offered an internship position, you should liaise with your host organisation supervisor to complete the final details required for the PIPS MOU. This covers:

* An outline of the scope of your internship, the project title and a description of your role;
* A timeline for the internship, including any meetings or events you’ll be expected to attend;
* An outline of any health and safety, risk issues, confidentiality, and intellectual property for your project; note that EastBio must also see a copy of the PIPS host organisation’s Health and Safety policy.
* An outline of any related travel and/or insurance policy;
* An outline of any additional organisational approvals you may need from your host organisation;
* Allow time to get the PIPS host’s input on the sections that apply to them; as there may be different members of staff involved in this (e.g. the Health and Safety officer), be prepared for some delays and make sure that you’ll be on track;
* Ensure that the form is read, agreed, and signed by both your PhD and PIPS supervisors;
* Submit the completed and signed PIPS MOU for approval to EastBio in good time before your placement is to start.
* After approval of the PIPS MOU, any significant change in the agreement conditions must be re=submitted for review and approval by EastBio.

We advise you to send a copy of your PIPS MOU form to your PIPS host after your PhD supervisor has reviewed it and provided you with feedback. EastBio will not approve any incomplete PIPS MOU.

**Please note**: It will not be seen as acceptable professional practice to withdraw from either preliminary or advanced negotiations with a PIPS host organisation for anything other than genuinely unforeseen circumstances.

The following resources may be of interest:

* “Five reasons to do an internship during your PhD program” at [https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01087-9](http://www.studentemploymentservices.co.uk/).
* “How to get a great internship” at [https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01361-w](http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/information-current-students)
* Nature Blog Posts: Ask the expert: What other jobs can bioscience researchers and PhD students consider if they want to leave academia? [Ask the expert: How do I figure out what value I have to offer non-academic employers?](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/)
* [http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2014/11/20/ask-the-expert-what-other-jobs-can-bioscience-researchers-and-phd-students-consider-if-they-want-to-leave-academia](http://www.studentemploymentservices.co.uk/)
* [http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2015/02/19/ask-the-expert-how-do-i-figure-out-what-value-ihave-to-offer-non-academic-employers](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/study-with-us/student-life/student-support/career-services/)
* There is a helpful set of recourses on reflection practices produced by the University of Edinburgh, available at [https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/careers/) (sign in may be required).

*This guide was produced as a reference point for use by the East of Scotland Biosciences Partnership students involved in undertaking 3-month mandatory professional internships as part of their UKRI Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council funded programme. The guide was produced by the EastBio team in consultation with the Institution of Edinburgh Institute for Academic Development, members of the Careers Service and the EastBio partner institutions and is reviewed each year. It adheres to the relevant sections of The UK Quality Code for Higher Education published by the QAA (qaa.ac.uk). It draws on methods of good practice within the ASET Good Practice Guide for Work-Based and Placement Learning in Higher Education (https://www.asetonline.org/).*

*This is intended as a guidance document to be used as a reference point to ensure that appropriate steps are being taken with regards to best practice and quality assurance to meet institutional responsibilities in safeguarding the student learning experience and development, as well as their safety and wellbeing.*

*Disclaimer: This Guide has been developed based upon the advice and guidance available at the time of its review; every effort has been made to ensure that the information containted within the Guide is correct at the time of web publication. Users of the guide should ensure that they are familiar with current guidance and regulations in their own institution. Should you notice any errors, inaccuracies or inconsistencies in this Guide or on our website, please let us know by emailing* [*placements@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk*](http://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/placement-job-search) *or* *enquiries@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk**.*

1. The UoE advice on this is as follows: If you are a full-time student, the University recommends that you [postgraduate taught students] *do not work more than 15 hours per week*. The University will not employ full-time postgraduate research students for more than *an average of 9 hours per week across the academic year*, and we recommend that postgraduate students apply this limit to employment outside the University. ([Working in the UK during studies | The University of Edinburgh](https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/immigration/working-in-the-uk/during-studies)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Please note the following UoE advice in terms of full-time work placements: “If you interrupt your studies to undertake a work placement or internship, you *cannot* use your Tier 4/Student visa. You will need to seek alternative immigration permission which will allow you to undertake full-time work in the UK. You will need to apply for a new Tier 4/Student visa to return to studies.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)