# How to meet my supervisor?

When you have browsed the EastBio PhD projects advertised on FindAPhD, and have decided to apply for one that best suit your research interests and career ambitions, you should think about the role of the project supervisor and their support for your application.

As you know, EastBio asks all supervisors to nominate one candidate for their EastBio project; we will then score all nominated candidates for the EastBio interviews. It is important that your project supervisor, who has confirmed to you that they will support your application, submits a strong Candidate Nomination form -- the form through which they confirm that they support your application for consideration by the EastBio shortlisting panel (remember, being nominated for a project means that you’ve successfully gone through the first of three selection processes – nomination, shortlisting, interview).

We recommend strongly that you contact the project supervisor informally before you submit your EastBio application. If you are external to the host institution and a stranger to the supervisor, this first ‘cold’ contact may be out of your comfort zone so we’ve listed below some tips that may be helpful:

1. Before your contact the project supervisor
* Identify who the project supervisor is: this is the first supervisor named on the project advert on FindAPhD. You’ll need their name, institution, email address and research details, all of which can be found on their staff webpage, either given in the advert or easily searched on the web.
* It helps to know who you want to hopefully work with in the future! Browse through the staff pages and familiarise yourself with their research. The project you’re applying for will be based on their broad area of expertise, so it’ll be useful to be aware of how it relates to their broader research interests. It’d be helpful to note any links to other research areas, potential connections with industry, any interdisciplinary projects, translational or commercialisation outcomes (start-ups), etc.
* It helps to know their institutional context: Identify their home institution and location – look into the institutional overall research strengths, what other research they support, etc. -- and the contact details of the local administrator. This last information may be helpful in the case when response is slow - in that case, the local administrator may be able to advise you on how best to reach that academic.
* Have an updated copy of your CV ready to share with the project supervisor and read carefully the PhD project details.
* Do your homework! Prepare some questions on the project, for instance: what are the main research question(s); any separate projects that are part of it; areas where the challenges are expected; how would that work meet your own interests and ambitions; skills required from the start vs. those that will be developed; training to be undertaken; contributions to the project by co-supervisors, industry partners, etc.

B. Draft and send an email inquiry to the project supervisor

The following is a template you may wish to adapt and use when you first contact the project supervisor. The email does two things: (a) it introduces yourself as an exciting candidate, and (b) it seeks further information on the project, your application, or further support that they may be willing to give you. It is very important in this initial email to show your passion about the project and how it fits into your own personal story. If this gets through, it may be the first of a few emails (perhaps leading to an online meeting) and, with some hope, the beginning of a thriving PhD collaboration!

Dear Dr/Professor….

I am considering applying for your EastBio project [add title] that I saw advertised on FindAPhD [or that was recommended to me by my tutor/lecturer at x institution). I am passionate about x subject and I’d be very keen to do a PhD in your lab.

[You may want to add 1/2 sentences about yourself here about why you want to do a PhD and why you’d be an excellent match for the project, perhaps because you’ve already done some work on relevant topics, because you have some of the aptitude and skills needed for it, or because you want to address an issue/application/outcome related to it.] I attached a recent copy of my CV [and/or a copy of my draft application form] and I’d like to know whether you would have time to discuss this a bit more with me before I submit my formal application to EastBio (closing date 15/12/25).

As I plan to apply for your project, it would be brilliant if you would let me know whether you would be likely to support my application, or need some further information from me.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.

Kind regards

C. After you have contacted the project supervisor

* Some supervisors are in high demand and may not be able to respond to your enquiry immediately, so please be patient. Don’t bombard them with the same email but simply follow your first email with a second email after a week or so.
* If no response is given, consider contacting the institutional administrator for advice unless there is specific advice on the FindAPhD project about this. As recruitment is the busiest period in the admin calendar, make sure you don’t send more than a couple of emails to a contact and then proceed to submit your application within the deadline (15/12/25).
* The lack of response from a supervisor does not mean that they are not likely to support your application. However, after the application closing date, you may again send them a brief email to ask them whether they have made the decision to nominate you.
* If you were not nominated, it means that your application was not supported by the project supervisor and, therefore, EastBio cannot process your application any further.
* Not all supervisors have the capacity to give feedback on applications they have reviewed. You can assume that their decision was made on the basis of the level of applications they have received. EastBio has briefed supervisors and explained that the candidates they should look to nominate must have excellent academic background, qualifications and references and/or excellent academic potential, as well as fit for the project and strong personal skills (motivation to do a PhD, resilience, etc.). Only 30% of the total studentships we fund can be international fee students as this is one of the UKRI conditions.
* EastBio briefing is clear to project supervisors about our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion approach: we run a guaranteed interview scheme for home-fees BAME students. We take into account your personal statement and, for home-fees candidates of equal merit, we positively weigh specific protected characteristics, including age 30+, known disability and some socio-economic features (e.g. first generation in HE, caring responsibility, care experience).

Email the EastBio team enquiries@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk or come and speak to us at one of the open online Q&A sessions in the winter of 2025!