** **

**EASTBIO EDI Statement**

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# GENERAL

EASTBIO DTP incorporates Widening Participation (WP), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Dignity and Respect (D&R) in its core features and is embedded in partner departments which, for the most part, have Athena Swan Silver accreditation and so already operate in an actions-driven EDI environment. Since 2019 - and more fully following the third instalment of our UKRI-BBSRC funding - we have wished to lead in implementing measures to improve diversity and inclusivity in both recruitment and on-the-programme support for funded students’ research and professional development. We seek different ways of pro-actively promoting wellbeing and a diverse and inclusive research culture across the DTP. We include in our aims systematic work to explore and implement measures to increase the engagement of our students and supervisors in EDI initiatives.

This Statement – which we hope to expand with the additions of agreed policies to do with Safe Spaces, EDI Training Charter and a Supervisor Charter - aims to clearly summarise the EASTBIO DTP3 EDI plan that includes well-developed goals and specific actions to support its delivery. EASTBIO pronounces its explicit adherence to EDI and D&R principles and our commitment to support their implementation across the partnership in all aspects of our programme, from recruitment to researcher training and development. We aim to seek feedback from students who prepare for, or complete mandatory placements (PIPS or placements that are integral part of their Collaborative studentship) and, where possible, we will consult and engage our Alumni/ae on actions considered.

At the core of our EDI plan lies the whole-person approach that is based on a lack of separation between research from researcher and respect for the dignity of all individuals. Because we believe that support for the human person brings solid benefits for research, industry and society we aim to develop measures to secure such benefits through supporting the individuals that make up our partnership. We expect that the goals of our Programme are achieved by student wellbeing, healthy work-life balance, equal access to opportunities to develop personally and professionally, and mutual respect in the contract between student and supervisor. We share our partners’ pool of resources that provide such pastoral support, alongside additional DTP measures such as the work of the EDI Committee and the Mental Health First Aid group.

The above represent an expectation arising out of our partner institutions’ legal obligations, UKRI terms and conditions, and EDI data evidence at recruitment that we have been collecting consistently since 2019. Under the DTP3 EDI plan, EASTBIO pledges support to all funded students while acknowledging that additional measures of support may benefit more individuals with the characteristics such as:

Physical or mental health issues/chronic illness, or previous experience of MH issues, or with family members managing such issues; Neurodivergent or differently abled students; minority and international students; LGBTQIA+ in STEM; caring responsibilities or care-experienced; first generation in higher education; part-time PhD, returning to study after a long absence, mature students

To note, there is no clear direction or consensus within the HEI context of specific aims that an EDI policy should set. As a DTP, we act on goals and targets gauged from EDI evidence (data from our recruitment process tracked along the PhD life, training feedback and our annual survey implement in 2023), backed by national research on PGR development, and discussed transparently and agreed across the partnership at Management, Advisory and EDI Committee levels. We are committed to regularly review, monitor and reflect on the progress of our plans; we stand accountable for actions we prioritise as a DTP. To this end, we maintain clear and transparent lines of communication across the partnership and all our shareholders, including our funders and the EASTBIO Advisory Board. Updates to our plans will be based on quantitative and qualitative evidence collected at recruitment and enriched by additional measures such as cohort-wide surveys, in-depth interviews of stakeholders, use of focus groups, etc.

# MEMBERSHIP

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EDI Chair | Dr Thomas Otto [to7@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:to7@st-andrews.ac.uk) (EDI data at recruitment) |
| EDI Deputy Chair | Dr Toni Dismore [Toni.Dismore@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:Toni.Dismore@sruc.ac.uk) |
| EDI Officer | DTP Manager Dr Maria Filippakopoulou [Maria.Filippakopoulou@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Maria.Filippakopoulou@ed.ac.uk) |
| EDI Student Representatives | **Student Lead:**  **Jack Horne** <[j.horne.22@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:j.horne.22@abdn.ac.uk)> (first-year)  **Deputy Student Leads:**  **Robyn Greene** [s1629812@ed.ac.uk](mailto:s1629812@ed.ac.uk) (first-year)  **Logan Newstead** [L.Newstead@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:L.Newstead@sms.ed.ac.uk) (third-year)  **Second year cohort reps:**  **Ella** **Catherall <**[E.R.Catherall@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:E.R.Catherall@sms.ed.ac.uk)>  **Abdelazeem** **Elhabyan <**[A.A.Elhabyan@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:A.A.Elhabyan@sms.ed.ac.uk)> |
| EASTBIO Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) group | [eastbio.mhfa@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](mailto:eastbio.mhfa@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk)  Details of group members at: <http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/mental-health-first-aiders> |

# ROLES

Following the EASTBIO DTP3 Mid-Term Review, EASTBIO has proceeded to set up a sub-committee focussed on EDI, R&D and WP – for details, see table above.

## Academic Chairs

The EDI Committee does not hold EDI expertise but is responsible for the delivery of the overall EDI Plan by working closely with the EDI Officer (DTP Manager) and EASTBIO Support Officer, the Management and Advisory Groups, as necessary, and institutional EDI officers in partner institutions; members of the Committee will. The remit of the Committee’s Chairs is to:

* lead in discussions with the aim of agreeing on, delivering, monitoring and reviewing individual goals and actions to meet these goals;
* highlight areas for further improvements depending on capacity;
* record and convey issues brought to their attention by students or supervisors;
* relay its recommendations for further actions to the Management group.
* take part in any UKRI-run EDI workshops and best practice-sharing activities;

## EDI Officer

The EDI Officer will be responsible for;

* working with the Support Officer to ensure that the agreed measures are delivered within the specified deadlines
* supporting Committee meetings (whether scheduled or ad hoc), naming deputies, as necessary for the smooth delivery of the Committee’s goals and ensure that all necessary information is shared across its members and shareholders
* coordinating any reporting necessary to the Management Group, the Advisory Group, as necessary, and the funder for reporting purposes (Annual and Mid-Term reports).

## EDI student representatives

Reps volunteer at the Induction, with no limitation on the number of individuals who may take up the role. Current student reps will nominate a max of two students who will be lead contacts in terms of formal meetings and reporting – confirmation of contacts end of March 2023.

We recognise that the Committee will benefit from different embodied perspectives and do not wish to curtail a spontaneous process of engagement by new students. There is no restriction on the year when a student can volunteer for this role because we believe that the resilience developed by individuals throughout their PhD programme results in cohort-wide benefits.

Although personal views and beliefs inform individual commitment and drive, student volunteers should represent the views and perspectives of their peers first and foremost. The EDI Committee should not be used as an ideological platform but as an inclusive space to strengthen our support for students and supervisors.

Duties include:

* respond to meeting invitations, confirm attendance and review shared papers and minutes; nominate a student rep to attend scheduled meetings should lead committee members be unavailable; attend the meeting prepared to join in the discussion, provide input or further suggestions and recommendations, etc. as relevant.
* be prepared to volunteer to lead on a specific action, depending on availability, and report on that action, or nominate another student.
* call an ad hoc meeting should serious or urgent matters arise, or contribute with agenda items when a meeting is called.
* stay in touch with the other EDI student reps and the EASTBIO students in (at least) their own local department; make themselves available to talk to students who request it, or provide opportunities for students to approach them to discuss the EASTBIO programme; convey input they receive to the Committee.
* Stay in contact with the EASTBIO Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) group and request input from First Aiders as necessary.

We acknowledge that the role may generate additional workload, therefore we ask our student reps to maintain clear communication with one another regarding duties that may have a fixed deadline, so that these can be passed on and carried out by different reps depending on availability. We expect that student reps will share updates about actions so that periods of individual absence will not affect communication and representation. Any travel (including subsistence) student reps will undertake as part of their role's duties will be reimbursed by EASTBIO. Included in the role, for first- and second-year student reps, is a bonus of 10 training points in recognition of the additional time investment students will be making.

Student reps can be approached at any point by any EASTBIO student for advice and assistance; we ask student reps to be respectful, non-judgmental and discreet, and seek the consent of the affected student before they report their input to the Committee, preferably anonymously. Grave matters of a personal nature reported to a student rep may exceed their own personal ability to manage and affect them adversely. Such matters may be best referred to the EASTBIO MHFA group, whose members have received relevant training and can signpost to appropriate services; details & contact email on the table above.

## EASTBIO Supervisors

The Committee agreed that the role of **EASTBIO supervisors** within our EDI plan is adequately encapsulated in the Supervisor Charter communicated to all new supervisors when they join the EASTBIO programme and at Induction. This set of guidance explicitly sets out EASTBIO expectations with regards to the overall support of funded students, in terms of both research and personal development. EASTBIO expects supervisors to attend the key events of Induction Days and Symposia where they have the opportunity to speak to the EASTBIO Management and Advisory Group members in attendance, discuss such requirements and input their opinions & experiences of the EASTBIO Programme.

## EASTBIO Mental Health First Aider group

The **MHFA group** consisting of 12 volunteers (both students and academics across the DTP) who received training in Mental Health First Aid in 2021/22 with BBSRC EDI Implementation Funds; the group is a crucial mechanism of our plans for pro-active pastoral support to current students. EASTBIO is responsible for circulating information for accessing one-to-one sessions with First Aiders – via an online sign-up form - and monthly virtual drop-ins via the EASTBIO website and the monthly Newsletter. The Committee welcomes initiatives to integrate the mechanism across our events (for instance, the Annual Symposium and Induction), as well as with other similar work across the DTP partner institutions.

# GOVERNANCE

The EDI Committee working closely with the EASTBIO Management Group will review progress annually at the scheduled June EMG meeting (usually at the Annual Symposium, in Edinburgh) and throughout the year. The EDI Committee will have a maximum of 4 scheduled meetings in October, February, March and June. Any Committee member can call for *ad hoc* meetings should there be urgent issues to be discussed. The Committee will decide on the process and mechanism for reporting concerns, making complaints arrangements, details for which can be published on the relevant platform, whether the website, our twitter and/or monthly Newsletter. Members of the EDI Committee can propose news items for the Newsletter in conjunction with similar recommendations from the MHFA group.