**EASTBIO Recruitment – FAQS**

*Note that the questions shown below are questions frequently asked by candidates, updated with questions the EASTBIO team has received in the 2021/23 recruitment, whether by email, phone or during the online Q&A drop-in sessions. We will update the list with any questions that represent queries and issues faced by our candidates. You can email the EASTBIO team at* [recruitment@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk) *at any point to ask us about our recruitment and your application.*

*Click on specific Contents, below, if you want to read more about a specific aspect of our recruitment that you have questions about.*

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# EASTBIO Recruitment jargon busters!

The language we use around our recruitment may sound straightforward if you are a member of the EASTBIO team, but may be confusing or unclear to everyone else. Below is a list of some commonly terms and acronyms.

## EASTBIO team

Our ‘team’ includes the DTP Manager and the DTP Support Officer. Obviously, we could not do it on our own. Therefore, the 2 female-strong team is working together with ‘EASTBIO Administrators’ that includes a number of officers based in each partner institutions – departments in the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, St Andrews, Stirling, and also SRUC, JHI, MRI and IBioIC. These support teams are guided by the EASTBIO Management Group, consisting of one representative from each of the nine partner institutions.

## Home-fees students

Students who are either British nationals or European citizens with a leave to remain in the UK (such as a permanent residence or an indeterminate leave to remain). Having a home-fees status may entitle students to certain advantages such as having free access to medical cover via the NHS, or access to certain programme schemes (such as the PIPS scheme).

## Nominated students

Students who have applied to an EASTBIO PhD project and have the support of that project supervisor. The EASTBIO shortlisting panels will only consider nominated candidates when they decide on who to interview for a place on the programme. If your application is not supported by the project supervisor, you will not be considered for an EASTBIO interview at all. It is important to seek to speak with the PhD project supervisor and discuss your application with them.

## Shortlisting

This is the stage when the applications of nominated candidates get reviewed again, by EASTBIO panel members, with the aim of selecting between 2 and 3 candidates per PhD studentship available for funding. So, as a candidate, you will have to compete to be nominated by the project supervisor and to be shortlisted for an interview. That should take you to an EASTBIO interview where you’ll be competing at 2:1 for an EASTBIO PhD studentship.

## Flags or flagging

a process by which candidates are matched with one or more of the *protected characteristics* they have disclosed via the EASTBIO EDI Survey that is as part of applying for funding (note: we always provide the option ‘prefer not to say’). These are individual characteristics -- such as age, gender, disability, or ethnicity -- that come under the 2010 Equality Act because they may act as barriers for a person’s accessing opportunities to develop professionally. Like individuals, academic institutions -- whether publicly funded or not -- are expected (by law) or strongly encouraged to take action to keep such individual traits from becoming barriers; or to take action to address evidence for any discrimination on the basis of one of these characteristics. EASTBIO flags prospective candidates for a number of those characteristics especially for home-fees candidates: BAME, age 30+, disclosed disability and some socio-economic factors. We don’t do this merely to obey the law but because of the real, and long-term benefits of having diverse researchers with rich, variable engagement and investment in scientific work!

## UKRI Funding

This may sound simple but... We receive funding to award a certain number of PhD studentships from the UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (UKRI BBSRC), but we maximise this number via the DTP matched funding model. This means that for each studentship we were awarded by BBSRC, we aim to recruit not one but two students by dividing BBSRC and committing 50% funding by the host institution hosting the student(s). We invite industrial partners to commit such a percentage by collaborating with supervisors for a Collaborative studentship project. That way, our cohorts are twice the size!

## EASTBIO PhD allocation

The allocation each year of a limited number of available PhD studentships (fully-funded for 4 years of PhD study) is the combination of a number of selection processes that take place (a) locally, at each of our partner institutions on the basis of a common DTP-wide guidance and forms and (b) jointly, at EASTBIO level. When the EASTBIO Management Group meets in late February to decide who will be offered a PhD studentship in the following autumn has in hand a list of shortlists of all interviewed candidates and the quotas per institution, i.e. the number of places each institution is to be allocated that year, based on their institutional research strength that was written on our proposal agreement to BBSRC. To this, the senior academic leads will also take into account the quota we maintain for each research thematic area (which were, too, written on our proposal agreement). Each academic lead at that meeting will have the confirmed financial commitments of their head of school so that they can approve their total matched studentships. Finally, this is the time in the recruitment when the senior leads will discuss flagged candidates with a view to prioritise any who should be offered a place on the PhD programme when of equal merit to those who are not flagged.

## Notified as an ‘unsuccessful’ or a reserve candidate

If you have read the above carefully, you will be more aware of our recruitment process and the scale of competitiveness for places on the programme. Excellent candidates are those nominated, those shortlisted and, in the main, those notified as ‘unsuccessful’ or ‘reserve’; only a very small number of our nominated candidates are scored as unfundable (or not suited to the programme). Not making it through does not necessarily reflect on the merit of an application but rather on the limited number of our available funding. Panels are instructed to score applications which are then passed on to the interview stage if they were scored higher than a cut-off score calculated to the number of available awards. Competition is harder for international-fees candidates as we have a limit on how many to recruit, 30% of the total allocation per year.

# Frequently asked questions

## Money

**What does the EASTBIO Studentship cover?**

* The EASTBIO studentship covers:
  + Your PhD tuition fees of £4,712
  + A minimum annual stipend set annually by UKRI. For 2023/24, the minimum stipend was £18,622 full time equivalent
  + An annual Research Training Grant (RTSG) of £5,000 from the first to the third year of study, reduced to £1,500 in the final year (write up)
  + An annual travel bursary of £230
  + Additional expenses for your mandatory Placement (or Collaborative Placement) via competitive application at a maximum of £1,000
  + Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) – this is additional individual support available for students who have a diagnosed disability and require a number of adjustments during their programme of study.

**Does the EASTBIO studentship cover the difference between home and international fees?**

Each year each EASTBIO partner institution confirms a waiver scheme in place for international fees; this means that international students are liable to pay home rather than international fees (covered by their EASTBIO studentship if successful).

**As an international student, I have high costs to do with Visa application and health insurance in the UK. If I were to be successful and accepted by EASTBIO, would I be able to apply to be reimbursed for this kind of costs?**

At the moment, EASTBIO is regrettably unable to cover visa and health insurance charges for our international students. The EASTBIO Management Group takes this additional cost and the limitation it represents for individual students seriously but at the moment options to support with these costs is at the discretion of each partner institution.

**Does EASTBIO cover for my travel costs if I were to visit the lab hosting the PhD project I am applying for?**

Some of the EASTBIO partner institutions can support candidate lab visits; information about this is published on the website in early October 2023.

**Does the EASTBIO Stipend cover the normal cost of life in Scotland?**

EASTBIO applies the UKRI minimum stipend for PhD students which has increased in May 2023 to £18,622 full time equivalent from 1 October 2023 onwards. This represents an increase in line with the national inflation. As a funded DTP, we have not got additional funds to provide further stipend increase, so we rely on our partner institutions for any such sources of funding.

# Eligibility

**I am an international student, am I eligible to apply?**

Yes, you are. However, please note that we have a limitation of the number of international candidates that we can fund each year, as determined by our funding body, UKRI BBSRC. We cannot fund more than 30% of the annual student intake, or 15 students approximately in total (across all partner institutions.

**I am an international student with Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK, am I eligible to apply?**

Yes, you are. Please see above.

**I am an EU national with settled status and I have lived in the UK for over 3 years, but for educational purposes (study). Am I eligible to apply?**

Yes, you are. Please see above.

# Projects

**I have an idea for a PhD project. Would EASTBIO fund my project if I could secure a supervisor?**

No, we would not. EASTBIO is funded by UKRI BBSRC to support PhD students who are recruited on the basis of pre-approved PhD projects and themes that are of strategic priority to UKRI BBSRC. Prospective projects are submitted in August/September to EASTBIO according a specific set of guidelines and are reviewed by the EASTBIO academic leads from each partner institution.

**I am interested in a particular project. How do I go about applying? Do I contact the supervisors before I apply and get them to support my application?**

EASTBIO only considers applicants who have been nominated by project supervisors. Therefore, you are encouraged to contact the principal supervisor who has an advertised EASTBIO project and discuss your application with them before you submit it to the host institution.

**I want to apply for more than one project. Do I send the same application to the different institutions?**

This year, EASTBIO invites applications by interested students for one project only.

# Process

**I want to do a PhD in Aquaculture/Bioinformatics, etc. Where can I get list of prospective supervisors in that area?**

EASTBIO advertises a number of projects across strategic areas, including Aquaculture and Transformative Technologies. The PhD project advert features the names of the project supervisors, who can be contacted by candidates directly, or via a search on the institution website hosting the project(s) in question.

**Do I apply for the PhD project and, if I am accepted, I apply for the funding?**

No, your application to EASTBIO is both for the PhD project you are interested in and the UKRI BBSRC-funded studentship (fully-funded 4 years).

**Do I need to send my application and any of my application documentation to EASTBIO directly to make sure that my application will be submitted?**

No, you should not send any of your application documents to EASTBIO directly. You submit your application to the institution hosting the PhD project you are interested in (that is to say, the institution where the project’s principal supervisor is based at). If you are nominated by the project supervisor, your application will be reviewed at the next shortlisting stage.

**Can I apply to the EASTBIO programme for a second time having applied last year?**

Yes, you can.

**Where on EUCLID do I upload my EASTBIO Application Form?**

Please follow the guidance provided and upload your EASTBIO Application Form under the section Research Proposal. For any EUCLID-based queries, please contact the local graduate school contact provided on the FindAPhD advert or the administrative contacts at the bottom the EASTBIO How-to-Apply webpage.

## Documentation

**Can I send EASTBIO my academic CV so that I know whether I can apply to the programme?**

No, you do not need to send an academic CV to EASTBIO. The EASTBIO Application Form has a relevant section that captures details usually provided in the CV; this is because we want to have as uniform information about candidates as possible to ensure fair review across EASTBIO panels. But do note that the PhD project supervisor may ask for your CV before they reach a decision about who to nominate.

**Are there other documents I will need to submit besides those mentioned on the EASTBIO “How to Apply” webpage, like IELTS score or a research proposal?**

EASTBIO requests only the documents that are listed on that webpage. This is so that we can assess all candidates on the same basis across the board. However, the institution hosting the PhD project you apply for may ask for additional documents and you should comply with those requirements; details of these are given on the PhD project advert on Find-A-PhD.

**I will not have completed my integrated Masters course by the closing date. Am I still able to apply?**

Yes, you can still apply. You should ensure that the end date of your Masters course is before October 2024, which is the default start date for the PhD programme. Please note that a deferred date is also possible. If that is the case, please make sure you discuss this with the project supervisor and the host institution.

**The Institution I am applying for has requested that I should also submit a statement of interest. Is this additional to the statement on the EASTBIO application form?**

Yes, it is additional and not part of your EASTBIO application form. Our partner institutions may ask applicants for additional documents and/or forms and you should comply with such requirements. You may also consider using the same statement for both purposes making any format adjustments as necessary.

## References

**Will my referees be asked by EASTBIO to provide their letter of support for me?**

EASTBIO will not contact your referees, that is your responsibility. The institution hosting the project(s) you are applying for will provide guidance for referees to follow and this may vary from institution to institution. read the guidance on the Find-A-PhD project advert, download the EASTBIO Reference form from <http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/how-apply-0>, and send it to your two referees with some details of what they should provide; explain to them how, where and by when they need to send their reference or – as the case with applications via EUCLDI – they may need to wait for the system to email an automated request. If you are unsure, please contact the person named on the PhD advert on Find-A-PhD for advice on this. EASTBIO may not be able to advise as the application process is managed by our partners.

**Can the prospective supervisor provide a reference for me, as they were my MSc tutor?**

No, they cannot. You should ask another academic or professional who can provide some comments for you on your application.

**I am not sure whether to submit my references via a specific link, or via email?**

Specific guidance for references is provided by the host institution on the PhD project advert on Find-A-PhD. If you are unsure, please contact the person named on the PhD advert on Find-A-PhD for advice on this.

**Will references submitted after the closing data be accepted?**

There is some flexibility around this, but you should contact the local administrator at the host institution to make them aware of any concerns around references due.

## EDI Survey & support

**Do I use the receipt number or do I create my own ID in the online form?**

The Online Survey will automatically generate a unique respondent number that you can copy and paste on your EASTBIO Application Form. The number will look like 952767-952749-101484854. You do not need to do anything other than complete the form on the link we have shared via the web-page and also linked on the EASTBIO Application Form.

**I am unsure about how to provide the EDI Survey Receipt Number requested on the EASTBIO Application Form. Do I have to do something to generate it?**

No, you do not; see the answer above. The Online Survey will automatically generate a unique long number that you can use as instructed.

**Can I download the EDI Survey and submit it to the Institution I am applying for?**

No, we do not advise you to do that as the survey asks for personal data that are sensitive and provided with your consent. This data will be accessible only to the EASTBIO DTP Manager and will only be used to flag applicants for specific protected characteristics that we use under our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Please read our Privacy Notice at <http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/>.

**I have a family. What can I expect in terms of support from EASTBIO if I am awarded a PhD studentship?**

EASTBIO and EASTBIO partner institutions have a variety of support mechanisms in place for existing students that are reviewed each year on the basis of current student feedback, and shared via the Student Handbook (for a current version, please go to <http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/eastbio-handbook>), the webpage, and our monthly Newsletter. We are currently reviewing our support provision and will confirm direct information about support for students with young families in October 2023. For more information about student support, please go to the EASTBIO EDI web-page at <http://www.eastscotbiodtp.ac.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion>.

# Post-application

**What are the criteria for selection for the EASTBIO programme?**

The selection criteria are the candidate’s academic merit and potential, as well as fit to the EASTBIO Programme. Candidates are assessed on the basis of their application, their interview and their understanding of the EASTBIO programme.

**Is there a specific date by which EASTBIO will notify all applicants, whether successful or not?**

We cannot guarantee a date by which final notifications will be sent out to candidates due to the scale and nature of our recruitment, jointly across our nine partner institutions.

**When do I need to start preparing my presentation?**

If you are shortlisted by EASTBIO, you will receive an invitation to an interview approximately ten days before the interview date that provides further details about preparation and expectations. The interview presentation will be on a previous research project you were involved with. You are encouraged to discuss this with the project supervisor.