

Wellcome Trust-NIH PhD Studentship Program

Responsibilities and Obligations of Supervisors

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The **Wellcome Trust-NIH PhD Studentship Program** is a new partnership between the UK Wellcome Trust and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Graduate Partnerships Program (GPP). It unites the two organisations through their shared interest in promoting the training of exceptional students in international collaborative biomedical research. This scheme provides opportunities for the most promising postgraduate students who are UK/European Economic Area nationals to undertake four-year PhD training based in both a UK/Republic of Ireland academic institution and the intramural program of the NIH.

Students will undertake a collaborative project and be co-mentored by supervisors at both locations. It is envisioned that the student will spend an equal amount of time in both laboratories, although the specific division of time will be dictated by the nature of the research project. The studentship is awarded for four years.

While the student is in the UK, funding (stipend, college fees and a contribution towards research costs) is provided by the Wellcome Trust. While at the NIH, the student's stipend, health insurance, travel and research costs are the responsibility of the NIH mentor commensurate with those provided to other graduate students consistent with the customary practice for NIH training programs. During the duration of the partnership, the Wellcome Trust will support tuition on behalf of the student.

Project applications are submitted by the prospective student to the Wellcome Trust towards the end of November. Applicants must have identified a suitable doctoral supervisor at an eligible academic host institution in the UK or Republic of Ireland. The host institution must be able to confer doctoral degrees. The applicant must also have identified a suitable supervisor (known as a "mentor" in the US) at an NIH institute. The NIH supervisor should hold a tenured or tenure-track position for the period of the award and should be willing to provide funding for the student whilst at the NIH.

Successful applicants are then short-listed and called to interview at the Wellcome Trust offices in London at the end of the following January. Five successful applicants are then offered awards which should be accepted formally by the end of February. Successful candidates will accept an offer of admission by mid-April and will attend an induction period at the NIH in August and September after which they may begin their project either in the UK or at the NIH.

The principal focus of this program is to train top caliber research students in an advanced, collaborative, multidisciplinary format to best prepare them for successful careers as creative basic or clinical investigators. Supervisors will have the major responsibility in the development of these young people as research scientists. Fundamental to this task are diligent communication between all three parties and an integrated effort during the entire term of the research project.

STEPS FOR SETTING UP A RESEARCH PROJECT

- (1) The UK and NIH supervisors in the partnership should agree in advance on an area of research of mutual interest, potential projects that the student may carry out, and which parts of the project will be conducted when and where. Although the plan will evolve with the discoveries and opportunities that transpire as a project matures, collaborators should agree a common vision of what will constitute a successful training path for the student.
- (2) The two supervisors should engage fully with the formal application process, completing the relevant sections of the application form and guiding the prospective student as appropriate. Experience to date shows that applications are stronger if the candidate has liaised with both supervisors when he/she is writing the proposal.

- (3) In addition to the formal application, if a successful applicant accepts a studentship award, it is the responsibility of both supervisors to help the student write up a research proposal (maximum of 5 pages) describing the project and to prepare a brief timeline for where and when the research will be carried out. The proposal should reflect a thorough familiarity with the relevant literature and be written by the student during induction period at the NIH scheduled for the student during August and September. This proposal will be the first task the trainee undertakes.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE LABS

- (1) Since students work primarily in one lab during any given year, it is absolutely critical that good communication be maintained between the student and both mentors. This can be accomplished by e-mail and/or video conferencing (NIH has a facility for this located in Building 10 which is available free of charge to investigators). The student should seek periodic feedback from both supervisors. Phone conferences are encouraged as a way for all collaborators to discuss points in detail. *iChat* or *Skype* used for video conferencing have proven to be convenient tools to ensure students and supervisors maintain appropriate levels of communication. Regular email between all parties is the most widely used approach.
- (2) A colloquium will be held once a year in conjunction with the NIH-Oxford/Cambridge Scholars Program to bring both supervisors and the student together for quality discussion time. This will generally take place in late June or the first week of July each year, either in the UK or at the Bethesda campus of the NIH. Supervisors are **REQUIRED TO ATTEND** if at all possible.
- (3) Each year, students must submit to the program leadership updated CVs, biographies, and information about their research accomplishments.
- (4) Students and mentors are expected to regularly publish and present their findings both within the NIH community and outside of it.
- (5) Supervisors are expected to encourage students to participate in NIH-wide activities including those sponsored by the GPP, the program (e.g. Journal Club), and the International Biomedical Research Alliance (a non-profit organization that supports the program).
- (6) Together with other Wellcome Trust-funded PhD students, those supported by a Wellcome Trust-NIH PhD Studentship will also be invited to attend a meeting during their first year of study, and then again in their final year, at the Wellcome Trust offices in London. All students who are in the UK at the relevant time are encouraged to attend.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

While the student is in the UK, funding (stipend, college fees and a contribution towards research costs) is provided by the Wellcome Trust. While at the NIH (including during the August/September induction period), the student's stipend, health insurance, travel and research costs are the responsibility of the NIH mentor commensurate with those provided to other graduate students consistent with the customary practice for NIH training programs. During the duration of the partnership, the Wellcome Trust will support tuition on behalf of the student. The GPP will arrange and pay for travel to (and from, if necessary) the NIH for the August/September induction period.

VISAS

Once a successful applicant has accepted an award, he/she must contact the GPP office and the NIH supervisor's Administrative Officer as soon as possible in order to begin processing the paperwork for the appropriate visa. The visa application will be processed by the NIH Division of International Services (DIS) via the NIH mentor's lab.