

The DTP programmes make decisions on which areas to fund studentships in, and certain 'Small Science' areas (such as Plant Biology) are overlooked in favour of 'Big Science' agendas. Has BBSRC considered what effects this may have?

With the Doctoral Training Programmes (DTPs) it is the responsibility of the institutions to assign studentships appropriate to their expertise as research organisations and as a partnership. The broad areas that DTPs are expected to allocate studentships in were agreed in the Portfolio Agreement submitted as part of the DTP competition, and which forms the basis of a 'contract' between BBSRC and the partnerships. Each DTP is encouraged to ensure that niche and strategically important skills (as identified in the BBSRC Skills Statement) are appropriately supported.

The DTP programme has moved studentships from blue skies/ideas base research to tool training and methods based research, was this intended and has BBSRC considered the impacts?

The DTP programme continues to support the development of excellent scientists by funding (at a higher level) opportunities for independent research, and by enabling students to have the flexibility within their studentship to explore new and alternative lines of research. This concept of student-directed research is a key component of the UK PhD. We do, however, recognise the need to support students develop the methodological and generic research skills (including the use of new technologies, mathematical and statistical approaches and new ways of working) to ensure the training they receive is of the highest quality and provides the skills needed for 21st century biosciences.

Will failure to secure a DTP in the preceding round disadvantage applicants in future (due to lack of prior experience, or evidence of previous success)? How do you 'break in' to this kind of funding?

DTPs, like all BBSRC grants, are assessed in competition against published criteria and based upon the case made in the application. Only the highest quality proposals get funded and the DTP competition is highly competitive. We would expect successful applications, whether from an existing DTP, a new Partnership evolving from an existing DTP or a wholly new DTP, to offer evidence of a high quality research and training environment which would ensure that the students are being trained in all areas expected of a modern PhD programme. We have no plans to exclude those research organisations which are currently not members of DTPs from applying, either as part of an existing DTP seeking renewal or as part of a new Partnership.

Is BBSRC going to allow EU students to hold BBSRC studentships?

No. Ultimately this is a matter for Government and not an issue on which BBSRC could unilaterally act, but there is an agreed cross-Research Council position, to which BBSRC is party, that does not support opening studentship schemes to overseas students.

Is the administrative burden of managing Doctoral Training Partnerships justified?

DTPs are major partnerships between research organisations and the BBSRC to provide excellent doctoral training, providing an integrated, outward looking and balanced training environment for students, responding to the high-level skills needs of UK biosciences. Delivering this is a major undertaking and one of the advantages of the relatively large size

of DTPs is that it has encouraged research organisations to make appropriate professional appointments to manage the partnership awards.

Why has the name and role of Training and Awards Committee been changed?

The change to Committee E from TAC is a continuation of the changes that were undertaken to move from seven to four research committees. It brings the processes by which we undertake peer review of fellowships, studentships and other awards (such as the Flexible Interchange Programme) into more harmony with those processes by which we peer review responsive and managed mode grants, allowing different approaches for different schemes.

MSc students are excellent for impact as they go out to work in companies. Few seem to be UK students and we seem to be training our competitors.

Masters admissions policies of research organisations is not an area BBSRC has any influence over, and we would encourage organisations to select the best students based on these policies. BBSRC, in line with other Research Councils, no longer provides support for Masters funding (although we *do* support industrially-relevant Masters-level training through the Advanced Training Partnerships and Modular Training Partnerships schemes).

Training for industry is great but ends up in academic labs losing staff. The expansion of the private sector whilst the public sector contracts is causing problems. What is being done to tell the government that we must maintain the science base in universities?

Training people for careers in the wider UK economy as well as industrial as well as academic research is central to BBSRC's training strategy, recognising the key role scientifically-literate, highly skilled people have in supporting economic growth. We recognise the benefit of moving people, skills and ideas between the public and private sector to share best practice, knowledge and experience; this is a key goal of our Flexible Interchange Programme (FLIP) (www.bbsrc.ac.uk/flip). BBSRC continues to make the case to Government that a productive and vibrant research base within the UK's world-leading research organisations is essential for inward investment and economic stimulation and growth.

What are the studentship placements?

The Professional Internships for PhD Students (PIPS) scheme is an integral and mandatory element of the training provided through the DTP programme. BBSRC recognises that only around 40% of BBSRC-funded students remain in academic research, and the PIPS scheme offers a valuable opportunity for students to experience a non-academic work environment, and enable them to recognise the non-research transferable (i.e. soft) skills that doing a PhD provides them with.

The PIPS scheme requires students to undertake a three-month placement, unrelated to their core thesis project, in a different environment. This could be in industrial research, other aspects of business (including business development and technology transfer), the media, education, public engagement, policy etc.