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**EastBio EDI Statement**

Contents

[GENERAL 1](#_Toc172643813)

[MEMBERSHIP 2](#_Toc172643814)

[ROLES 3](#_Toc172643815)

[Sub-Committee members 3](#_Toc172643816)

[EDI Student Representatives 3](#_Toc172643817)

[EastBio Supervisors 4](#_Toc172643818)

[EastBio Mental Health First Aider group 4](#_Toc172643819)

[GOVERNANCE 5](#_Toc172643820)

# GENERAL

EastBio DTP incorporates Widening Participation (WP), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Dignity and Respect (D&R) as core features of our programme. The partnership 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. EastBio is committed to lead in implementing measures to sustain and improve diversity and inclusivity in the two main areas of the programme: our joint recruitment cycle and support for the researcher and professional development of our funded students. We continue to explore ways to extend that support to our supervisors and student reps. We adopt, review and monitor a variety of measures to pro-actively promote wellbeing and a diverse and inclusive research culture across our programme. We seek to implement measures to increase the engagement of our students and supervisors in EDI initiatives.

This Statement – which we hope to expand with additional guidance on Inclusive Communication, Supervisor Charter, Safe Spaces, EDI training provision - aims to summarise the EastBio DTP3 EDI plan that includes dynamically-set goals and specific actions to support its delivery. We seek cohort-wide feedback from funded students and supervisors on the programme on an annual basis and respond with programme changes and improvements. Our governing bodies – the Management Group, the Advisory Board and our dedicated subcommittees – monitor closely the delivery of the programme and the assessment mechanisms and confirm changes that promote and enhance its delivery according to EDI principles.

 At the core of our EDI plan lies the whole-person approach and respect for the dignity of all individuals. Because we believe that support for the human person brings concrete 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 maintain regular communication with students and supervisors on our plans, actions and expectations by providing regular opportunities for in-person and online discussions. We share and signpost our partners’ pool of resources that provide pastoral support alongside additional DTP measures such as the work of the EDI subcommittee, EDI student reps, and the Mental Health First Aid group.

EastBio does not tolerate any form of harassment, discrimination or bullying and we take seriously any complaints made by students and supervisors whether formally or not.

The above represent an expectation arising out of our partner institutions’ legal obligations, the EastBio DTP Award agreement, the UKRI terms and conditions, and a number of UKRI resources and guidance. Under the DTP3 EDI plan, EastBio pledges support to all funded students while acknowledging that additional measures of support may benefit individuals with characteristics such as: physical or mental health issues/chronic illness, or with family members managing such issues; neurodivergent or differently abled students; minority and international students; LGBTQIA+; caring responsibilities or care-experienced; first generation in higher education; part-time students, returning to study after a long absence and mature students.

As a training partnership, we act on goals and targets based on analysis of quantitative and qualitative evidence (diversity data from our recruitment cycles tracked along the PhD life, training feedback, cohort-wide survey such as our annual Programme Survey, use of focus groups), backed by national research on PGR development, and reviewed at Management, Advisory and EDI subcommittee levels. We are committed to monitor, regularly review, and reflect on the progress of our plans; we are accountable for actions we prioritise collectively. 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.

To deliver our plan on EDI, R&D and WP, EastBio has established a dedicated subcommittee whose membership includes student volunteers.

# MEMBERSHIP

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EDI Chair | Dr Thomas Otto to7@st-andrews.ac.uk |
| Advisory Board EDI rep | **Dr Nik Copeland** n.copeland@lancaster.ac.uk |
| EDI Deputy Chairs | Dr Toni Dismore Toni.Dismore@sruc.ac.ukDr Maria Filippakopoulou Maria.Filippakopoulou@ed.ac.uk |
| EDI Student Representatives | **Student Lead: Jack Horne** <j.horne.22@abdn.ac.uk>**Deputy Student Leads:****Amelia Newton** afn5@st-andrews.ac.uk **Robyn Greene** s1629812@ed.ac.uk **Logan Newstead** L.Newstead@sms.ed.ac.ukTraining & Development EDI student rep: **Ali Somerville** ali.somerville@ed.ac.ukIndustry Engagement EDI student rep: **Sajan McCorkindale** s.mccorkindale.23@abdn.ac.ukRecruitment EDI student rep: **Emily Fields** Emily.Fields@hutton.ac.uk |
| EastBio Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) group | MHFA group contact email: EastBio.mhfa@eastscotbiodtp.ac.ukDetails of group members at: [https://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/EastBio/equality-diversity-inclusion/EastBio-mental-health-first-aid-group](https://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/eastbio/equality-diversity-inclusion/eastbio-mental-health-first-aid-group)  |
| EastBio complaint form | <https://forms.office.com/e/rxe5LdcftM> |

# ROLES

## EDI Subcommittee members

The EDI Subcommittee is responsible for the delivery of the overall EastBio EDI Plan. The remit of the Committee is to:

* lead in discussions with the aim of agreeing on, delivering, monitoring and reviewing individual measures to implement the EDI Plan;
* Liaise with the Training & Development subcommittee in the analysis and response to the Annual Programme Survey;
* highlight areas for further improvements depending on capacity;
* conduct analysis on the recruitment EDI data and make evidence-based recommendations to the Management Group on corrective/mitigating actions (a recent example is the adoption of a guaranteed interview for home-fees BAME candidates in the 2024 recruitment cycle);
* record and convey issues brought to their attention by funded students or supervisors;
* relay its recommendations for further actions to the Management Group.
* take part in any UKRI-run EDI workshops, networks and best practice-sharing activities

## EastBio Supervisors

The Committee agreed that the role of EastBio supervisorswithin our EDI plan is critical and we have developed a **Supervisor Charter** that is communicated to all new supervisors and uploaded on our website in autumn. This set of guidance sets out EastBio expectations with regards to the overall support of funded students, for research and personal development. EastBio expects supervisors to attend the key events of Induction days and Symposia where they have the opportunity to support their students, speak to the EastBio Management and Advisory Group members in attendance, discuss their experiences and make suggestions for further improvements.

## EDI Student Representatives

Role description

Students volunteer for the role at the Induction. We recognise that the Committee will benefit from different embodied perspectives and therefore apply no limitation on the number of students who can join the group. Volunteers can step down at any point with a simple notification to the EastBio team.

Current student reps will nominate a max of two students who will be lead contacts in terms of formal meetings and reporting to the EastBio Management Group – confirmation of contacts each October. By student decision, one EDI student rep will join each of the other 3 Subcommittees to observe the maintenance of EDI principles across the programme.

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

### Role duties

* respond to meeting invitations, confirm attendance, nominate agenda items and review shared papers and minutes in advance; 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, as relevant.
* be prepared to volunteer to lead on a specific action, depending on capacity, and report on that action, or nominate another rep to take over.
* call an ad hoc meeting should serious or urgent matters arise.
* stay in touch with the other EDI student reps and the EastBio students in (at least) the reps’ own local department; make themselves available to talk to students who request it, or provide opportunities for students to approach them; advice and/or signpost students to a more relevant contact within EastBio depending on the issue reported; convey input they receive to the subcommittee.
* Stay in contact with the EastBio Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) group and request input from First Aiders as necessary.

Communication

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 and capacity. We expect that student reps will share updates about actions so that periods of individual absence will not affect communication and representation.

Recognition

Subject to confirmed budget, EastBio will provide additional EDI-focused training to student reps in support of their requirements and will be open to further suggestions from students. Any travel costs (including subsistence) undertaken as part of the role will be reimbursed by EastBio. Included in the role, for first- and second-year student reps, is a bonus of 20 training points (for the first two years) in recognition of the additional time investment.

Sensitive information

Student reps can be approached at any point by any EastBio student for advice and assistance; therefore, we ask student reps to be respectful, non-judgmental and discreet, and seek the consent of the affected student before further actions can be taken (including escalating the concern). Grave matters of a personal nature reported to a student rep may exceed their own personal coping ability 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.

## EastBio Mental Health First Aiders

The **MHFA group** consists of students and members of staff who received formal training in Mental Health First Aid in 2022 and 2024 with BBSRC EDI Implementation & Supplementary funding. The group is a crucial, albeit informal mechanism for pro-active pastoral support and signposting to current students. EastBio is responsible for facilitating contacts between current students and the group and sharing resources and news on activities via the monthly Newsletter. The Committee welcomes further measures to integrate the mechanism across our events, as well as with other similar work across the partner institutions or external stakeholders.

# GOVERNANCE

The EDI subcommittee monitors the EDI programme via 3 annual meetings in October, February & March and presents a formal review proposal at the Management Group meeting in June each year. Anyone involved in the EDI governance bodies can call for *ad hoc* meetings should there be issues arising or suggest news items for the Newsletter. The Committee decides on the process and mechanism for reporting concerns, responding to complaints, details for which will be published on the EastBio website and/or monthly Newsletter.