



Biophysical Sciences Institute

Summer Research Bursaries

2026

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Undergraduate Summer Research Bursaries

Our Summer Research Bursaries support ambitious and excellent undergraduate students from Durham University to take part in boundary-breaking interdisciplinary research during the summer vacation of their penultimate academic year.

These bursaries offer more than internships; They include activities designed to give participants additional opportunities to develop their research and communication skills, and provide a route to outputs that evidence these to future employers.

- Open to Durham University students only
- 6-8 weeks of research embedded in an interdisciplinary research laboratory
- 2-3 days of this time will be given over to a cohort project - a challenge to be tackled by the pool of bursary holders and aimed at developing teamwork and communication skills
- Final reports to be presented in the form of posters at a half-day symposium arranged by the bursary holders during their projects with the support of the Institute Manager
- **Closing Date:** 24 April 2026
- [Undergraduate Summer Research Bursary Application Form 2026](#)





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What is in it for Undergraduates?

BSI Summer Bursaries were launched in 2011 and in since then we have awarded over 100 bursaries, as well as supporting many students who have received external funding. Many of the students who have taken part in these projects have gone on to PhDs, PDRAs and beyond. Alumni of this scheme hold academic positions at institutions across the world and senior positions in Industry.

Our scheme includes activities that promote the development of research and communication skills in the cohort. These will be evidenced through news items on the BSI website and through this page, providing a resource to refer to for prospective employers.

Bursary holders will receive £423 per week as a bursary. If accommodation is needed, we will work towards securing college accommodation.

Gain hands-on experience

“My summer internship with the BSI taught me so much, more than I could have learnt from my undergraduate degree alone! I was able to develop new skills and learn new lab techniques, such as mammalian cell culture and laser scanning confocal microscopy. It was insightful to experience the reality of research, where you may not always see significant outcomes, or observe what you expected! I would highly recommend this experience to others - it’s an excellent way to build practical lab skills, connect with leading academics, gain insight into cutting-edge science, and even have the chance to contribute to published research”. BSI 2024 Summer Research Bursary holder.

Develop key skills desired by employers

“Working as part of a larger team and attending talks helped me to understand the importance of an interdisciplinary environment, where individuals with differing specialties work together to achieve a common goal.” 2019 Summer Research Bursary holder.

Who can apply?

Applications are accepted from penultimate-year undergraduate students studying at Durham University. We will consider projects in any area of interdisciplinary research at the boundary between biosciences and the other physical sciences including mathematics, engineering and computer science. For more about our research themes, please see our [Research Themes webpages](#).

A selection of “ready-made” project titles will be displayed on this website very soon. As well as these we warmly welcome applications for projects outside of these titles. If you have a research area in mind and would like help to identify a potential supervisor, please get in touch by email to bsi.manager@durham.ac.uk.

How to apply

Finding a Potential Supervisor

The BSI website contains a list of BSI Academic members with a list of research interests. This is a good starting point to find out if there is someone whose research interests match your own. However, Bursary Supervisors do not need to be drawn from this group. When contacting a potential supervisor, please make sure this is well ahead of submission of your application and be aware that they may not be able to take on supervision of a bursary student for a number of reasons. If after looking at the BSI webpages you still do not know who to approach, please contact bsi.manager@durham.ac.uk with a short summary of your research interests and we will be able to offer further advice.

Submission and Assessment of Applications

A link to our 2026 application form can be found using the QR code below. When we receive an application we share this with the named supervisors and BSI Executive Board (find out more here) who assess the applications according to the following assessment criteria:

- Applicant’s academic qualifications (weighting 25%)
- Applicant’s motivation (weighting 25%)
- Quality of the research proposal (weighting 25%)
- Strategic fit with BSI remit (weighting 25%)



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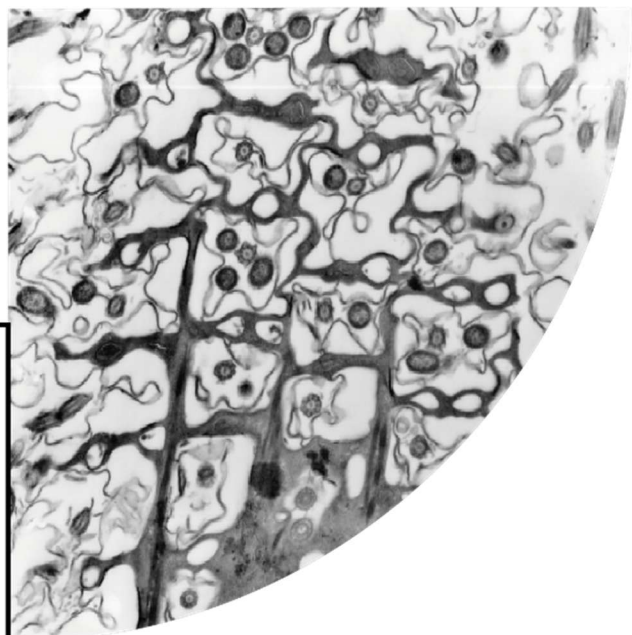
Timelines

- Launch Event: 12 March 2026, 1-2 pm.
- Applications open: 12 March 2026
- Closing date: 24 April 2026
- Core weeks: Depend on cohort availability.

Get in Touch

We are happy to help with any questions about the Summer Research Bursary Programme.

bsi.manager@durham.ac.uk.





What is in it for Supervisors?

The 2026 Bursary scheme focuses on building new links and collaborations between academic groups, particularly in new areas of research. Projects can be between academics in Durham, or external colleagues and industrial partners.

Forming new research collaborations

From our 2022 project supervisors we know that all the projects in the 2022 cohort have led to further research in their host groups

New research directions

2/3 Of our 2022 cohort's projects supported funding applications in their host groups.

New Thematic Bursaries

For 2026 we are introducing clustered projects – a group of summer bursaries of the available summer bursaries will be ringfenced to focus on a specific research challenge – with an emphasis on exploring the theme from different disciplinary perspectives. This offers greater depth to the research involved in these projects and more opportunities for the bursary holders to experience collaborative research.

The 2026 thematic area will be: *Next-generation network modelling for complex systems*

Supporting New Research

Alongside the Thematic Bursaries, we will continue to support the most innovative research from across our research portfolio.

All projects that fall within the remit of interdisciplinary biosciences at the boundaries of the life sciences and other physical sciences are considered.



Our Past Summer Bursary Cohorts

Since 2011, our Summer Research Projects have given undergraduate students access to high quality interdisciplinary research. Giving them a unique experience of interdisciplinary research and allowing the research groups involved to forge new collaborations. We are proud of the success of our programme which includes:

- Roughly 50% continue into further study (based on data from the 2014-2016 Bursary holders).
- Giving interdisciplinary research experience to over **100** undergraduates since 2011.

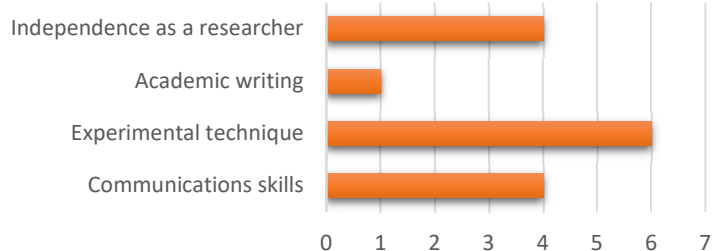


Feedback from earlier cohorts

In 2024, we funded 7 students from 4 departments through our scheme with a further 2 applicants funded through external schemes.

- For 2022 bursary cohort, all planned to take a postgraduate degree or R&D in industry.
- 33% of respondents from 2022 reported that the projects were their first taste of interdisciplinary research.

Skills Developed through the Bursaries (2022)



Highlights from previous cohorts

- [Lightox](#) the Durham University spin-out company was, in part, supported at an early stage by two BSI Summer Internships (in 2012) for Professor Andrew Whiting and Professor Carrie Ambler.

- *“The studentship allowed me to find out what scientific research is really like day-to-day and confirmed to me that a research career is something that I would like to pursue.” 2019 Summer Internship holder.*
- Pearce, P., Woodhouse, F.G., Forrow, A. *et al.* Learning dynamical information from static protein and sequencing data. *Nat Commun* **10**, 5368 (2019).
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-13307-x>
- *“What appealed to me the most was the possibility to collaborate with Mathematical and Physics Department while working on a real-life problem which has a great significance to the outside world. It was extremely rewarding to obtain the wanted results and make a small contribution to the science, something I did hope for.” 2019 Summer Internship holder.*
- Will Stuart-Walker, Clare S. Mahon, Glycomacromolecules: Addressing challenges in drug delivery and therapeutic development, *Advanced Drug Delivery Reviews*, Volume 171, 2021, Pages 77-93, ISSN 0169-409X,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addr.2021.01.018>.
- *“Working as part of a larger team and attending talks helped me to understand the importance of an interdisciplinary environment, where individuals with differing specialties work together to achieve a common goal.” 2019 Summer Internship holder.*

FAQ

I have been asked to look at the BSI Summer Research Scheme by an Academic within my Department/School and would like to know more about the potential project, can you tell me more?

The projects for BSI Summer Research Bursaries are written by the potential supervisor or applicant with support from their potential supervisor. This is intended to give applicants a level of control over their own research and to develop as investigators. The amount of input that potential supervisors have into the will depend on both the potential supervisor and the applicant.

Is this program eligible for UK students only or can overseas students apply?

The scheme is only open to Durham University undergraduate students.

I am in the final year of my degree but enjoyed the BSI project last year so much that I had to ask if I could be considered for a BSI Bursary this year as well?

The BSI Summer Research Bursary scheme is oversubscribed each year. This makes it extremely unlikely that students from academic years other than the penultimate year will be considered.

Summary - Scheme at a glance

- Open to Durham University students only
- 6-8 weeks of research embedded in an interdisciplinary research laboratory
- Cohort project and mini-symposium associated with projects
- £423 per week funding
- Two supervisors required per project
- Closing date: 24 April 2026.

