# Guidance: Vacation Studentships

The Microbiology Society Vacation Studentship is a competitive scheme that enables undergraduate students studying microbiology to work on research projects across the breadth of microbiology and gain essential insight into the world of research during the summer vacation.

Vacation students benefit from a year's free membership of the Society.

The scheme also enables supervisors to gain essential supervision experience. Vacation Studentship supervisors will have the opportunity to develop their grant writing technique and gain experience monitoring expenditure from laboratory budgets. By mentoring an undergraduate over the summer period, supervisors will develop their project management and leadership skills, and at the end of the studentship gain valuable evaluation and reporting practice.

Applications to this grant scheme must be made on behalf of the student by the supervisor.

## Who can apply?

Any PhD-qualified Full or Full Concessionary members who have held membership for a minimum period of one year and paid two consecutive membership payments may apply for the scheme. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Established and newly appointed Principal Investigators
- Postdoctoral researchers and Fellows who would like to gain experience of supervision
- PhD-qualified team leaders in biotechnology companies or similar Small or Medium Enterprises

We recommend that principal investigators encourage early-or-mid-career laboratory members (i.e. postdoctoral researchers and new lecturers) to apply for studentships independently to gain vital supervision experience.

## Important information about your application

All applications must be completed via the website online grant portal.

The application is organised in the following sections:

- **Project information**
- **Project details**
- **Further details**
- **Evidence and declaration**

## Project information:

This section asks for information on the project title, location, project host and host institute, dates, and duration.

## Project details:

This section asks you to provide in-depth detail about the project including the rationale for the project, the results you will obtain and the methods you will use. Often a lack of detail regarding the methods is where applications fall short. The fields in the form are listed below in '**The application'** section.

### Aims and objectives - Rationale:

This should set the scene for the current project. First and foremost, the project should be relevant to microbiology and be underpinned by good scientific reasoning. It should give the student scope for innovation and provide an experience they will not get from their degree course. The aims of the project should be clear and realistically achievable. Include references if you need to, but make sure you use your character limit appropriately. Key information to cover include:

- Is the project clearly related to microbiology?
- What gap in knowledge will the research fill?
- Is the project of interest to the student and the wider microbiology community?
- Is the project feasible for an undergraduate student?

### Methodology - Methods and outcomes:

This section should include all information about the techniques and methods that the student will employ to obtain their results. Key points to cover include:

- Are the methods an appropriate level of interest and complexity for an undergraduate student at this level? Referees often look favourably on projects which use a variety of methods which are not the same as those they encounter in practical sessions – for example, six weeks spent only running western blots will not necessarily be the best for the student's development. The best projects use techniques and methods that are challenging for the student but are not overly ambitious.
- Be clear as to why you have used this experimental approach, how it will help you achieve your aims and be realistic about how much time the work will take. It can be useful to upload a Gantt chart to show how the time will be used, which parts of the project are dependent on others, and how you will deal with setbacks if they occur – for example if a technical challenge is anticipated give a backup line of investigation.

This section also asks for information on how the project will benefit you and/or your student's professional development, and for the expected research outcomes from the project.

You will be asked for a description of the educational experience value for the student and the supervision support you will provide.

## Further details:

As described in **'The application – further details'** section below, the student will be required to complete their details and provide a personal statement.

## Evidence and declaration:

As described in **'The application – evidence'** section below, you are required to upload a student supporting statement.

# The application

Please read the information below carefully, as this gives specific information on what is required and provides character limits for each section.

The information you provide in the application form is the only information that the reviewers and award panel have to make a funding decision, so be clear and concise.

**Important:** *Please also note that we have implemented name-blind applications. This means your application* ***must not include any references to your name, gender, age, ethnicity, or any other protected characteristic****. We require the details of your student's name for administration of the grant if your application is successful; however, the reviewers will not be provided with these details.*

### Project information

- Project title - *500 characters*
- Project location - *600 characters*
- Project host (the supervisor) - *500 characters*
- Project host institution - *200 characters*
- Project start and end date - *dd/mm/yy*
- Project duration (in case of holidays between start/end date) – *days*

## Project details

- Project description
  *What is the event, conference, visit or activity that you plan to attend/undertake? (1000 characters)*

- Aims and objectives
  *Please outline the aims and objectives of your project. (1000 characters)*

- Methodology
  *Please provide details of how results will be obtained and also how the project will be achieved within the proposed timeframe. (2000 characters)*

- Expected research outcomes
  *Please outline the aims and objectives of your project and how this will contribute to knowledge in the field. (2000 characters)*

- Benefits to professional development
  *Briefly describe the value of the conference attendance or activity to your career and professional development and give comments on the necessity for it to take place at this stage in your career. Please include your career stage, e.g. '3rd year PhD student', or 'senior lecturer'. (2000 characters)*

- Student experience supervision
  *State the support that you will provide to the student and how the student's work will be supervised on a day-to-day basis. Give comment on any other personnel who will have a role in supporting the student and indicate their suitability to be involved. (2000 characters)*

- Student experience education value
  *What scope is there for innovation by the student? Indicate any additional laboratory/departmental activities the student may participate in and any opportunities they will have to present their work. (2000 characters)*

- Expected costs
  *For Vacation Studentships, please state how much you request for consumables. This may be up to £400 and is optional.*

- Costs breakdown
  *Please provide full itemized details of the funds you are seeking (as given in 'Expected costs').*

### Further details

This section asks for information about the student themselves and gives the referee insight into how the student will excel under your supervision.

The student

- Title
- First name
- Last name
- University
- Degree title
- Degree start and end dates

- Student Statement **(to be completed by the Student)**
  *State your microbiological interests and why you wish to work on the proposed project and in this laboratory. What do you hope to gain from the studentship? How is it relevant to your career aspirations? Please also give details of your academic record to date. (2000 characters)*

### Evidence

The last section requires:

- Student supporting statement **(Supervisor to upload with your application**).
  *The student supporting statement can come from you if you know the student well, however if you are not very familiar, this can come from their personal tutor. It should outline the student's recent grades and likely degree results to be able to make a judgement on how the student is coping with their studies so far, and to determine if the student has the theoretical underpinning and academic abilities to understand and apply the experimental approach. Please provide clear, accurate and the most up to date information possible.*

## The review stage

Once submitted online, the application will be sent to reviewers who will score the application. The reviewer scores are collated and submitted to an Award Panel, formed of members of the Sustainability Committee. **Please note that we receive a high number of applications each year and not all can be funded. Grants are awarded at the discretion of the Society, and the decision of the Award Panel is final.**

## The outcome

Supervisors will be notified of the outcome of the application within two months of the deadline and should tell the students as soon as possible. We ask for details to enable the transfer of the funds to be submitted ahead of time so that the student will be paid in a timely manner. You will also be sent a form for the student to provide a lab report and reflect on what they have learned during the project. We also ask for reflection from the supervisor.

If you have any questions about the Vacation Studentship scheme, please contact grants@microbiologysociety.org. We look forward to receiving your application, and hope that this guidance has been of use. For inspiration from previous grant recipients, check out our website.

Good Luck with your application!