

## Infectious Disease Research Network (IDRN) Student Research Programme

### Programme organisers

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### What is the IDRN Student Research Programme?

The IDRN Student Research Programme is intended to act as a catalyst between talented and committed students and institutions in the United Kingdom, by allocating volunteers to research projects (placement time could be anything from a few weeks to a year-long placement).

Such placements could be carried out during university summers, during academic course research placements, during medical elective periods, during Masters' projects, or during sabbaticals. Students from any field relevant to infectious diseases and infection-related projects would be eligible. All research and surveillance institutions are welcome to send us their details, and all types of research are welcomed, whether they are laboratory-based, epidemiological etc.

It is anticipated that the first IDRN research students could be placed with institutions for summer 2010.

### How does the IDRN Student Research Programme work?

A webpage has been set up on the IDRN website <http://idrn.org/placements/>, and this will contain a list of students looking for placements, and also a list of projects or studies ongoing that are keen to receive extra help. This allows potential IDRN research students to browse and apply using a set application form to the project that interests them.

Some, or possibly most, placements will be unpaid (at this stage, it is difficult to estimate the numbers of research institutions that will have funds available). However, the student will be advised on applying for suitable funding, usually in the form of small grants, to cover essential costs (accommodation, subsistence, transport). It is also possible that

the research institution may have sufficient monies available in their grant or budget to provide a small bursary to the placed student.

Students would be expected to make their own living arrangements. Accommodation could be at home (for example if the student carries out the project in a vacation period), student accommodation at the respective university or sought privately.

Every student who works on a study through this IDRN scheme would be required to write a report on his or her placement (probably between 800-1500 words). Suggested formats would be in the form of an academic article, a press release or simply a summary of their work. If of suitable quality, the report could then be submitted to a peer review journal. All IDRN research student articles would be compiled each year into an annual report of the programme.

#### **What are the benefits of being involved in this scheme?**

The research institution would benefit from an extra project member, and the student would gain key research skills and an insight into their work.

#### **What kind of placements would the programme offer?**

The IDRN Student Research Programme would reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the IDRN and offer clinical, basic science, epidemiological and health policy placements. So the aim is to have both laboratory-based and non-laboratory research available.

#### **How are researchers and institutions going to be contacted about this scheme?**

The IDRN has an extensive mailing list (circa 2000 members). We are also well-connected with the many professional bodies and societies, who would most likely be happy to advertise this programme through their contacts and mailing lists. Flyers can also be distributed to the delegates at infection-relevant conference.

#### **How will students hear about this scheme?**

Joseph has many contacts among the various student bodies and support groups, and we will target appropriate mailing lists and student careers fairs and other events.

#### **Are there any similar schemes that exist, in particular for infectious diseases?**

In the United Kingdom, no programme exists nationwide to place students into research placements on this proposed scale. Certain universities, such as Imperial College London, offer schemes such as the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme. (UROP: <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/urop/>). Programmes such as UROP, however, only allow students to take part at their respective university and are not specific to infectious diseases research. Alternatively, proactive students may organise their own research placement by contacting institutions and laboratories directly.

**What funding opportunities for students exist at present?** Several funding opportunities exist to support vacation research projects. These tend to be highly competitive. Among others, the following organisations offer financial support to students interested in pursuing a research placement:

#### *Selected Studentships and Grants*

- The Wellcome Trust (<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/>)
  - o Biomedical Vacation Studentships £1440 1520 for 8 weeks

- o Student Elective Prizes (overseas medical student placements) £1000 for minimum 4 weeks and £600 research costs
- The Nuffield Foundation (<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/>)
  - o Science Bursaries Undergraduate Research Scheme £1440 -1520 for 8 weeks
- Society for General Microbiology (<http://www.sgm.ac.uk/>)
  - o Vacation Studentships £1480 for 8 weeks and £400 for research costs
  - o Elective Grants (overseas medical student placements) £1850 for up to 10 weeks and £400 for research costs
- The Genetics Society (<http://www.genetics.org.uk/>)
  - o Summer Studentships £2250 for 10 weeks and £750 for research costs
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/>)
  - o Vacation Research Bursaries – up to £2500 for 10 weeks and research costs
- British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (BSAC: <http://www.bsac.org.uk/>)
  - o Vacation Scholarship Grants £1800 for 10 weeks and £500 for research costs
- Cancer Research UK ([http://www.london\\_research\\_institute.org.uk/](http://www.london_research_institute.org.uk/))
  - o Summer Studentships £2400 for 12 weeks
- The Pathological Society (<http://www.pathsoc.org/>)
  - o Undergraduate Bursary £1200 for 8 weeks
- The Physiological Society (<http://www.physoc.org/>)
  - o Vacation Studentships £1200 for 8 weeks
- The Biochemical Society (<http://www.biochemistry.org/>)
  - o Summer Vacation Studentships £1600 for 8 weeks

#### *Selected Awards and Prizes*

- Royal Society of Medicine (<http://www.rsm.ac.uk/>)
  - o Epidemiology & Public Health Prize £800
  - o Clinical Immunology & Allergy Section Prize £600
  - o Respiratory Medicine Section Prize £400
- Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (<http://www.rstmh.org/>)
  - o Student Prize £500

#### **What role could the IDRN play with regards to funding?**

Although there are funding opportunities available, they are in high demand. Inevitably, a lack of available and/or relevant funding options could mean interested and committed students are unable to gain experience of infectious disease research. The IDRN will attempt to seek out alternative funding sources with the aim of providing a select number of vacation studentships to talented students. This could hopefully stimulate the creation of further studentships from other sources of funding, such as industry. We will keep the

student and research community up to date with any progress with these aims on the programme webpage <http://idrn.org/placements/>

### **After the placements, what happens next?**

As previously mentioned, one of the probable requirements of this scheme would be the production of a short report of the placement. This report would be included in overall reports and documents detailing the scheme, and therefore students should clarify content with their research supervisors (for example, specifying unpublished data or methodologies may, or may not, be appropriate).

Programme organizers are considering the possibility of organizing an annual conference, held at the Royal Society of Medicine, whereby placed research students could be invited present on their work and experiences. Such an event would: 1) Increase attendance and reputation of IDRN amongst the student body 2) Provide a network of future leaders in infectious disease research 3) Provide an opportunity to present awards 4) Provide a opportunity to present articles and research from the projects.

### **Who chooses the applicants?**

The partner institutions choose the research student for their projects. If requested, the IDRN can provide administrative support to the institutions and researchers in collating and filtering applications if oversubscribed.

### **What are the costs of setting up such a programme?**

The main input initially would be in terms of time, which will be provided by the programme organisers. We will also be reliant on a certain amount of support and goodwill amongst the research and student community. Possible financial costs would include any inaugural launch events and an annual conference. These will be looked at in more detail in due course.

### **In a nutshell – what to do next (students and researchers)...**

You're a student interested in a placement? Look at <http://idrn.org/placements/>, browse the projects available and click on the application link.

Alternatively (or even as well as), contact Mike Head, [mhead@idrn.org](mailto:mhead@idrn.org) , and have your details and cv posted on the webpage for research institutions to view.

Or you're a researcher with room for extra help on a study for a few weeks or months? Visit <http://idrn.org/placements/> and fill out the online form with details of your study. This will be uploaded to the webpage, for students to browse.