

Plant Health Undergraduate Studentships 2020

Guidance for applicants

Essential information

The Royal Society of Biology (RSB) invites applications from researchers wishing to host undergraduate studentships in plant health over the summer of 2020. Ten awards are available.

These guidelines describe the Plant Health Undergraduate Studentships scheme for the 2020 intake. Please read the website and this guidance before making an enquiry or completing an application form. This information can be downloaded from www.rsb.org.uk/plant-studentships

The closing date for applications is 17 March 2020 at 23:59.

We expect a significant number of applications; receipt of completed applications before the deadline is essential.

Funding for the 2020 programme is provided by [Defra](#) (4 studentships), [BSPP](#) (3 studentships), [Crop Protection Association](#) (1 studentship), [SCI Horticulture Group](#) (1 studentship) and [David Colegrave Foundation](#).

Purpose

The Plant Health Undergraduate Summer Studentships programme aims to:

- Address skills and capacity challenges in plant health science by providing attractive opportunities for research experience to suitable undergraduates, offering them the opportunity to undertake supervised research with leading research groups.
- Facilitate training of undergraduates in research practice.
- Encourage research proposals and generate research outcomes in areas relevant to Defra's plant health priorities.
- Build networks of research groups, emerging scientists and employers with a focus on plant health.

Application criteria

Successful applicants must have both research expertise and offer a high quality research experience for the student. Applicants will be asked to indicate the level of supervision the undergraduate can expect to receive during the placement.

Researchers must have the backing of their institution to apply.

The proposed research project must address at least one of the following R&D priority themes in plant health identified by Defra, listed below. Applicants are encouraged to look at the risk register of current pests and pathogens at: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/phiw/riskRegister/>.

Priority themes in plant health

1. Detection or Control

Research exploring the development of new techniques for the detection and control of pests and pathogens (including the monitoring of healthy plants) or the deployment or application of existing methodology.

2. Data & modelling

Research applying data science and modelling approaches to risk assessment, spread of disease, pests and pathogens, surveillance or other aspects relating to plant health including the development of indicators to determine the effectiveness/value for money of plant health activities.

3. Globalisation of trade and risks to plant health

Research addressing the impact of the globalisation of trade on plant health, including internet trade and tourism (e.g. imports in passenger baggage), or research looking into methods to help target inspections of imported plants and plant products.

4. Host plants / Earth observations

Research addressing evidence gaps around the distribution and susceptibility of host plants in the wider environment. Research topics could focus on the development of approaches to map host species at risk. Alternatively, some hosts (e.g. *Vaccinium*) are susceptible to a range of pests - research could address how we can best assess the cumulative risks to these hosts from a range of pests.

5. High-risk pests or pathogens

Research focusing on high-risk pests or pathogens on the risk register that addresses the readiness of the UK plant health services to deal with them. To find the current list of pests in the risk register, you can download the register [here](#).

6. Knowledge exchange

Research focusing on how the UK Plant Health Services can engage most effectively with stakeholders (e.g. trade, NGOs, general public) to achieve better outcomes (e.g. fewer pest introductions, more effective response mechanisms, etc.)

7. Oak Health

Research focusing on factors impacting oak health, or addressing oak resilience and preparedness.

8. Transboundary plant pests

2020 is the International Year of Plant Health; research should address pests and pathogens that pose a threat to food security/plant and tree health on multiple continents or research on pests and pathogens that spread rapidly in traded goods.

Adjudication

Adjudication will be by the Selection Panel appointed for this purpose. The scheme is competitive. Applications will be judged on the scientific merit, the level of supervision and research experience the student can expect to receive, relevance of the research to priority themes, and interdisciplinary potential of the work.

About the awards

The awards provide support for the student at a rate of £250 per week for a studentship period of 8-10 weeks. The bursaries produce no National Insurance contribution liability. Each award includes £500 for costs to run the research; further research expenses are not offered under this scheme.

If successful, supervisors will be required to advertise their studentship to eligible undergraduate students nationally in collaboration with RSB (see 'Eligibility', below).

The RSB is committed to ensuring equal opportunities in the life sciences, and supports diversity throughout the pipeline; at school and higher education, in the workplace and training.

The RSB recommends unconscious bias training when undertaking recruitment. Successful supervisors will be offered free access to our online [unconscious bias training course](#) as part of the recruitment process before appointing a student.

Awards are not offered directly to individual researchers but to the institutions at which they are employed. By submitting the application form, the applicant signifies that they:

- 1) have obtained approval from their Head of Department for the award to be administered by their department, and have the support of their PI if the applicant is a postdoctoral researcher,
- 2) agree to the conditions of award set out in these guidelines,
- 3) agree to the requirement that the student produce, on completion of their placement, a poster about their research project that may be included in relevant RSB, UKPSF and member organisation publications,
- 4) agree to complete a short online feedback exercise on completion of the studentship.

Awards are made formally to the institution on the understanding that the research conducted by the student complies with the safety and ethical regulations of the institution, and that the institution will ensure that the requirements of all relevant regulatory authorities will be met before the work commences.

Eligibility

- Researchers at universities and research institutions within the UK are eligible to apply to host a Plant Health Undergraduate Studentship.
- Post-doctoral researchers with the support of their PI may apply to host a Plant Health Undergraduate Studentship. PhD students/candidates are not eligible for this award.
- Supervisor applications from within the membership of the RSB, and our member organisations, are encouraged; those who are not RSB members are encouraged to consider the [member application process](#). The successful supervisors will each receive 50% off their RSB membership fee for the following year (this will apply to the initial year of membership for newly-elected members).
- Studentships funded by the BSPP are available only to BSPP members.
- Only one application should be submitted per supervisor.

Successful projects will be widely advertised by the RSB from April 2020.

Undergraduate students will be invited to submit applications for selection by the supervisor of each project. If desired by the supervisor, RSB can provide input into the process of selecting an undergraduate student.

Eligibility requirements for students seeking a Plant Health Undergraduate Studentship are as follows:

- Students will normally take up the award during the summer vacation in the middle years (i.e. 2/3, 2/4 or 3/4) of their degree but final year undergraduates intending to continue to Masters or PhD may also be considered.
- Mature students are eligible to apply.
- Students must be registered at a UK institution for the majority of their undergraduate science degree.
- Bursaries will not be awarded for projects that take place overseas for more than 50% of the studentship period.
- The Royal Society of Biology will offer all successful students one year's free [student membership](#).

Timeline

The closing date for applications is 23:59 on 17th March 2020.

All applications will be acknowledged by email to prospective supervisors by 17:00 on 18th March 2020. If you have not received an acknowledgement by this date, please contact the RSB as soon as possible on: ukpsf@rsb.org.uk.

The decision of the Selection Panel will be communicated to all prospective supervisors individually by 17:00 on 3rd April 2020.

Students' applications for successful projects will be available for successful supervisors to review from 4 May 2020, and each studentship must be offered to a student by 26 May 2020.

The deadline for receipt of student posters and supervisor and student online survey responses following completion of the placement is 17:00 on 30th September 2020.

If you need to withdraw your application, you must let us know as soon as possible via email to ukpsf@rsb.org.uk. Please bear in mind that we are a small central team and that processing each application takes time.

If you receive alternative funding for your project, please let us know immediately so that, if necessary, we can re-allocate our funds accordingly. We will receive many more applications than we can fund, so please help us to use our resources in the most effective way.

How to apply

The application must be made by the person who will supervise the research and not by the student.

To apply to host a Plant Health Undergraduate Studentship, please complete the application form, [available here](#), outlining your proposal.

For queries, please contact us:

- Email: ukpsf@rsb.org.uk
- Tel: 020 3925 3440

Address: The Royal Society of Biology (Ref: PHUGS), 1 Naoroji St, London WC1X 0GB