

Academic Administration

The graduate student body in the Cambridge Research Institute is composed of both PhD students and Clinical Research Training Fellows. Details of the graduate training programme are co-determined by Cancer Research UK, the Institute, the University Department with which a student is affiliated, and the University of Cambridge. The entire staff of the Institute are committed to making it a great place to work and study and all provide support at all levels to our students.

The Cambridge Experience

There are currently 60 graduate students at the CRI which corresponds to ~30% of our entire research population. Our graduate students are fully integrated into their research groups where they are expected to make valuable contributions to the success of their groups. Twelve students commenced study in October 2008 and a further three will start in January 2009. Our student body is highly international – out of 15 new starters, five are from the UK, five from the EU and the remaining five from further afield.

Potential students apply to specific group leaders via Cancer Research UK's on-line application system. Group leaders select students for interview in December and January and successful



First-year graduate students:

*FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Angelika Modelska, Chris Hurley, Joo-Hee Sir, Sarah Kozar, Leanne Bell, Raj Girardi, Shen-Han Lee
BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Liam Cassidy, Andrea Sottoriva, Paweł Schweiger, Michael Fletcher*

applicants are then encouraged to apply for graduate entry to the University of Cambridge. Most of our students are members of the Department of Oncology, although some are members of the Departments of Genetics (Watt laboratory), Biochemistry (Brindle laboratory) or Applied Maths and Theoretical Physics (Tavaré laboratory). All students also belong to a Cambridge college so they gain the full collegiate experience while studying in the Institute. Many colleges provide graduate student accommodation and an active social network as well as sporting facilities: several of our students are already involved in rowing. Students also have access to a personal tutor in college who is available to provide pastoral care if required.



Support and Mentoring

Each student has a supervisor who is also a group leader and is also assigned a second supervisor who acts as a mentor and provides support. In addition, Ann Kaminski (the Scientific Administrator) acts as the first point of contact for any student with a query or difficulty that is not directly related to their scientific work. All student matters in the Institute are overseen by the Studentships and Fellowships Committee, chaired by Fiona Watt. This committee has the well-being of our students at heart, while ensuring that they are fulfilling the requirements of the University of Cambridge for obtaining the degree of PhD.

The Graduate Programme

Soon after their arrival, all of our new graduate students join the University graduate intake to attend the compulsory introductory safety courses organised by the University, followed by an Institute specific safety course and induction. All students and group leaders are invited to attend a party in the Institute, where the students are welcomed by the Institute's Director Bruce Ponder and the Assistant Director Don O'Nions. This is their first opportunity to meet some of the staff who will help them over the years to come and it is an extremely enjoyable and lively social occasion.

All first year graduate students are required to attend a series of 34 lectures in cancer biology, which are organised by the Department of Oncology. These lectures are given by specialists in their fields and the aim is to provide the students with a comprehensive overview of cancer biology, ranging from basic cell biology through to cancer diagnosis and treatment. This excellent and unique resource is available to all members of the University and is widely attended. The students are also briefed by the core facilities managers to learn of the services available to them. They also attend courses specific to the demands of their projects.

After two months in the Institute all first year students give 10 minute talks to each other and their supervisors to explain the nature of the projects. In accordance with University regulations, all graduate students studying Biological Sciences in Cambridge are not at first registered for PhD studies and must qualify for registration by successfully completing a first year report followed by a viva. Two examiners assess a student's report and then write a report on their progress over the past year.

Our second and third year PhD students give research talks as part of the Institute lunchtime seminar series which is given to all Institute staff. In addition, students complete a written report towards the end of their second year which summarises their work to date and also forms the basis for discussions regarding further work. Our graduate students all follow the three year graduate programme supported by the University of Cambridge; a further year is available if necessary to complete their thesis, which must be submitted within four years.



Like their colleagues in London, our students are encouraged to attend numerous courses planned to hone their transferable skills. These courses range from advice on how to make scientific posters to the Graduate Students Public Engagement with Science and Technology (GRADPEST) course organised by Cancer Research UK.



The Graduate Society

The graduate students have organised themselves into a very active Society which organises monthly journal clubs and a wide variety of social events including movie nights, punting and the occasional wine-tasting. The students also arrange meetings with visiting speakers and have a Christmas dinner with an invited speaker – this year's speaker was Allan Bradley from the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute. The Society has also introduced a highly effective mentoring scheme in which all first year students have two mentors located in different parts of the building. This provides new students with recognisable friendly faces in other labs and also helps them to settle in much quicker.

Other Student Activities

Many of the students have attended conferences and workshops both in the UK and overseas, with several attending the NCRI Cancer Conference in October and presenting posters. Many also attended the graduate student conference organised by the Netherlands Cancer Institute. This yearly meeting is organised by students from the host institution and attendees are invited from a range of European research institutes.

Awards and Prizes

Finally, congratulations to Hayley Thirkettle (third year PhD student, Neal Lab) who was the winner of the Sylvia Lawler Prize in Medical Oncology, awarded by the Royal Society of Medicine. She gave a talk at the Royal Society of Medicine on June 11th titled 'Post-translational modification and intrinsic nuclear and nucleolar localisation signals targets LYRIC to sub-nuclear compartments' winning the £500 prize.