

TARGETED PRIORITY STUDENTSHIP COMPETITION 2008

Background

Targeted Priority Studentships (TPS) are awarded in areas of strategic scientific importance which are being supported by BBSRC through other major funding initiatives. In the 2008 round, 20 studentships were awarded in conjunction with the Systems Biology Doctoral Training Centres and DRINC funding initiatives, and a further 51 studentships were allocated through a separate competition in support of:

- Ageing Research
- Bioenergy
- Bioprocessing
- Environmental Change

Proposal details and targeted areas

Fifty seven proposals were received in total from 36 institutions, 25 in the area of Ageing, 12 in the area of Bioenergy, 9 in the area of Bioprocessing and 15 in the area of Environmental Change. In four instances departments applied to two areas within the same proposal.

TPS Committee membership

The Committee was chaired by the Chair of BBSRC's Studentships and Fellowships Panel (SFP), now the Training Awards Committee (TAC). There were Science Introducing Members (IMs) for each area and SFP IMs to assess the proposals from departments that did not hold BBSRC Quota Doctoral Training Grant (DTG) funding. Full membership details are at **Annex 1**.

Allocations

It was agreed that the allocations would be made in the form of Doctoral Training Grants (for start in October 2009), and that the minimum allocation to be made would be a DTG of 3 four-year studentships.

Scoring and ranking of proposals

The science IMs scored proposals relating to their area in line with the assessment criteria for the competition (see **Annex 2**). The SFP IMs assessed the broader training environment (criteria included at **Annex 3**) in cases where no BBSRC Quota DTG was already held.

The scores from IMs were used to prepare ranked lists of proposals. On the basis of the agreed ranked lists in each area, a spread of awards was determined down to the cut-off point for the funding available across the four areas. Individual award levels were calculated using an algorithm based on research income in each area, weighted according to the weightings agreed by the IMs, and using a minimum allocation of three studentships. Details of the recommended awards are at **Annex 4**.

**ANNEX 1 – TARGETED PRIORITY STUDENTSHIPS:
2008 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

NAME	INSTITUTION
Professor Ottoline Leyser FRS (Chair)	University of York
Professor Clive Edwards (SFP)	University of Liverpool
Professor Mike Geeves (SFP)	University of Kent
Professor Dianne Berry (Ageing)	University of Reading
Professor Janet Lord (Ageing)	University of Birmingham
Professor Jonathan Powell (Ageing)	Unilever
Professor Mike Bushell (Bioenergy)	University of Surrey
Professor Simon McQueen-Mason (Bioenergy)	University of York
Professor Christine Raines (Bioenergy)	University of Essex
Dr Mark Carver (Bioprocessing)	Avecia
Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker (Bioprocessing)	University College London
Professor Phillip Wright (Bioprocessing)	University of Sheffield
Professor Gareth Edwards-Jones (Environmental Change)	University of Bangor
Professor Les Firbank (Environmental Change)	North Wyke Research
Dr Alan Raybould (Environmental Change)	Syngenta

ANNEX 2 - SCIENCE INTRODUCING MEMBERS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND SCORING DESCRIPTORS

		Scoring Descriptors								
		Good			Satisfactory			Poor		
Priority Area specific Criteria (i - iv)		Weighting (%)	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	1.5	0.0
i)	Fit of the priority area with institutional / departmental strategy, and evidence of institutional and departmental commitment to provide research training in the Priority Area in question.	25	At the top end of the scale the Institution will demonstrate a clear commitment to the Priority Area, evidenced by financial commitment and clear support from institutional and departmental research strategies.	An application scoring in this section will demonstrate ongoing research activity broadly aligned with the Priority Area, but without clear high-level institutional or departmental strategic commitment.			An application scoring in this section will either provide insufficient evidence, or evidence that the Priority Area does not form a major part of ongoing research activity, or seems marginal to the research strategy of the department or institution.			
ii)	Quality and volume of research relevant to the Priority Area in question, and evidence of a "critical mass" of active researchers (such as postdoctoral scientists) who will interact with research students.	25	Referring to the full range of data in the application, including research income, staff numbers and publications, the application demonstrates a quality and volume of research, and a critical mass of researchers, which would be judged by the sector as at the top end of the scale for the Priority Area concerned.	Applications scored in this section will demonstrate satisfactory levels of research activity in the Priority Area, in terms of the quality and volume of research undertaken, but not be regarded by the sector as a leading research group / department in the Area.			At this end of the scale, the application will demonstrate a quality and volume of research well below the sector norm for the Priority Area in question, and an insufficient critical mass of researchers for students to interact with.			
iii)	Quality of research training programme available in the Priority Area in question, including access to excellent facilities, opportunities to gain direct experience of up-to-date techniques and current technologies, and high quality and well balanced training in appropriate research methods.	25	The research training programme covers an exemplary range of current techniques and technologies, with students having access to state-of-the-art facilities for the Priority Area.	The research training programme is robust, but has some areas of weakness - for example lacking reference to some key current techniques or technologies relevant to the Priority Area in question.			The research training programme is insubstantial, poorly thought-out, or has major omissions.			
iv)	Studentship projects - quality of potential projects, including the range of areas covered and the training potential of the projects; procedures for selecting suitable supervisors, projects and students; plans for maximising impact of BBSRC funding through using Doctoral Training Grant flexibility.	25	The potential projects provide evidence of exemplary understanding of the training needs in the Priority Area. Students are provided with projects which are exciting and innovative; there are strong processes in place to ensure that the supervisors, projects and students selected are all of the highest quality, and that maximum useage is made of the flexibility permitted by Doctoral Training Grants.	The potential studentship projects listed are robust, but there are areas of weakness - for example the projects are uninspiring; or the stated training benefits do not always seem appropriate; or the processes are robust, but do not demonstrate best practice for ensuring the best supervisors, projects and students are selected.			The potential projects provided show little evidence of understanding current training needs in the Priority Area. The application does not give confidence that the department is able to select appropriate studentship projects which will provide suitable training for work in the Priority Area, or has any clear plans for using DTG flexibility to maximise the impact of BBSRC funding.			

ANNEX 3 - SFP INTRODUCING MEMBERS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Overall quality of the postgraduate training environment, including:

- Training in employment related transferable skills, including communication and presentational skills, in line with the [Joint Statement of the Research Councils' Skills Training Requirements for Research Students](#)
- Opportunities for students to attend and participate in postgraduate seminars and present work at some national scientific meetings;
- Regular monitoring of, and feedback on, student progress throughout their training, consistent with the [QAA's Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education, Section 1: Postgraduate Research Programmes – September 2004.](#)
- Robust procedures for the selection of supervisors and potential projects, and the recruitment of high-calibre students.
- Supervisor training.

Each proposal was categorised as either:

Good = proposal would have been ranked in the top third of proposals to the 2007 Quota DTG competition

Satisfactory = proposal would have been ranked in the middle third of proposals to the 2007 Quota DTG competition

Poor = proposal would have been ranked in the bottom third of proposals to the 2007 Quota DTG competition

BBSRC 2008 Targeted Priority Studentships Recommended Awards

AGEING Ref.	Department	Institution	Allocation
BB/G017832/1	Aston University	Sch of Life and Health Sciences	3
BB/G017190/1	King's College London	Biomedical Sciences	3
BB/G018049/1	University of Birmingham	School of Sport and Exercise Sciences	3
BB/G017565/1	University of Cambridge	Graduate School of Life Sciences	3
BB/G016917/1	University of Edinburgh	Centre for Cardiovascular Science	3
BB/G016569/1	University of Southampton	School of Biological Sciences	3

BIOENERGY Ref.	Department	Institution	Allocation
BB/G016690/1	University of Dundee	Sch of Life Sciences	3
BB/G017964/1	University of Nottingham	Sch of Biosciences	3
BB/G016801/1	University of York	Biology	3

BIOPROC Ref.	Department	Institution	Allocation
BB/G016348/1	Imperial College London	Biological Sciences	3
BB/G016593/1	University College London	Biochemical Engineering	6

ENVIRON CHANGE Ref.	Department	Institution	Allocation
BB/G017573/1	Imperial College London	Grantham Institute for Climate Change	3
BB/G01681X/1	John Innes Centre	Disease and Stress Biology	3
BB/G018014/1	Lancaster University	Lancaster Environment Centre	3
BB/G017794/1	University of Warwick	Warwick HRI	3
BB/G016801/1	University of York	Biology	3