

# MRC DTP in IBR - Student Experience Survey 2023

## Section 1 | Student stipend levels/cost of living

### Summary:

- Most students (70%) feel the student stipend is not sufficient to cover their living costs
- Many students (35%) take on additional paid work (average ~100 hours / year) to supplement their stipend (average ~ £1000 / year).
- Many students (~ 44%) are supported financially by their relatives or partner.
- Students believe the stipend should be set at around £21,000 / year.

### Action plan:

- The DTP will communicate these findings to the MRC Careers and Training group and Doctoral College and advocate for an increase in student stipend along these lines.

## Section 2 | Being an Interdisciplinary Student

### Summary:

- The majority of students (98%) found it useful to train along students from a range of backgrounds and most (94%) thought that the MSc in IBR enhanced or expanded their research skills.
- The majority of students (98%) thought that the MSc in IBR was useful in preparing them for their PhD project and most (87%) thought that it was essential or very useful to choose their mini-projects in the MSc year.
- Students suggested that additional training in programming, machine learning and bioengineering and introduction to Chemistry would be useful.

### Action plan:

- The DTP Steering Group and MSc in IBR teaching committee will review the MSc in IBR course with a view to improving interdisciplinary training in data and digital skills (including machine learning and bioengineering) and in translational methodologies (including diagnostics and systems medicine).

## Section 3 | Additional Skills Training and Academic Development

### Summary:

- Most students (87%) found the skills development workshops were useful
- In particular, the Excellent presentations (Duncan Yellowlees), Podcast (Adair Richards) and Career Development (Sarah Blackford) workshops were particularly well received.
- However, a high quality Academic and Thesis writing workshop is required.
- Students suggested that additional skills training workshops in Machine Learning / Advanced programming would be useful.

- Most students (91%) thought that listening to presentations from fellow DTP students was useful and helped to expand their scientific knowledge.
- Most students were pleased with the support and information received from the DTP Leadership team in identifying their additional individual skills training needs, but the support and information provided by their PhD advisory committees was more varied.

**Action plan:**

- The Student Staff Forum will seek to improve the training provision in transferable skills and academic development by consideration of this feedback.
- The DTP leadership team will clarify the expectation to PhD Advisory committee members that the additional skills training needs of students should be raised and discussed at progress review meetings.

## Section 4 | Communication and Feedback

**Summary:**

- Students were either very satisfied (92%) or at least somewhat satisfied (98%) that the MRC DTP team are friendly and approachable.
- Students were either very satisfied (92%) or at least somewhat satisfied (98%) that the MRC DTP team are timely and responsive to their needs.
- Students were either very satisfied (92%) or at least somewhat satisfied (96%) with the quality of support received from the MRC DTP team.
- Students were either very satisfied (85%) or at least somewhat satisfied (100%) that they could provide feedback to the MRC DTP team.
- Students were either very satisfied (79%) or at least somewhat satisfied (96%) that the MRC DTP team would act on this feedback.

**Action plan:**

- The DTP leadership team will try to maintain timely, high-quality, friendly and professional advice and support to DTP students and act on their feedback considerably and seriously and continuously seek ways to improve their service.

## Section 5 | Wellbeing, Guidance and Support

**Summary:**

- All students were somewhat satisfied (100%) and most very satisfied (67%) with the pastoral support received from the MRC DTP leadership team.
- Almost all students (94%) were confident that the MRC DTP leadership team would help them with supervisory issues and would do so rapidly, sensitively and effectively.
- Almost all students (98%) were satisfied with the efforts of the MRC DTP leadership team to support their mental health and well-being.
- The majority of students (78%) were satisfied with the support received from departmental and university well-being and disability services, when needed.

Action plan:

- The DTP leadership team will continue to provide high quality pastoral care and support to students and will request departmental funds to enable them to undertake training courses to improve their understanding and service provision.
- The DTP will encourage the departments (WMS and SLS) to employ a PGR Student Experience Officer to improve well-being, guidance and support to PGR students.

## Section 6 | Careers Support

Summary:

- All students were either satisfied (100%) or very satisfied (48%) with the careers guidance and support received from the MRC DTP leadership team
- Most were at least somewhat satisfied (79%) with the careers guidance and support received from the university, but this opinion was not universal
- The majority of students (83%) were clear as to what the Career Transition Fellowships were for but some students remain unclear
- Most students found the Careers talks from external speakers either somewhat useful (96%) or very useful (61%).

Action plan:

- The Student Staff Forum will seek to invite high quality individual speakers or panels of speakers that can provide insight into a variety of careers, nationally and internationally, in academia, biotech industry, pharmaceutical industry, global health, journalism, science communication, technology transfer, patent law, data science, clinical trials and health management.
- The DTP leadership team meets individually with every final year PhD student to offer careers support and guidance but will provide additional information to ensure student on Career Transition Fellowships are to make them aware they operate an open-door policy for additional careers support and guidance.

## Section 7 | MRC DTP in IBR community

Summary:

- Most students are either somewhat satisfied (98%) or very satisfied (87%) that the MRC DTP acknowledges and values diversity and differences, is welcoming and inclusive and that everyone on the DTP is treated with dignity and respect.
- Most students are either somewhat satisfied (98%) or very satisfied (87%) that being a member of the MRC DTP community is valuable and that this enhances their overall student experience.

Action plan:

- The Student Staff Forum will increase the number and quality of social and networking events to enhance student community and overall student experience.
- The MRC DTP will hold at least one cohort event a year at the Clinical Sciences Research Laboratories at UHCW to ensure that students working there do not feel

isolated. The DTP leadership team will also endeavour to provide drop-in sessions for those working on the main University of Warwick campus to ensure they feel fully included.

## Section 8 | Research and Training Culture

### Summary:

- Some students (30%) are somewhat unsure or unaware of the university's Dignity at Warwick policy
- Some students (7%) are somewhat unsure or only partly clear (80%) as how to raise and report any harassment or bullying issues that they may experience or witness.
- Most students (89%) are convinced that the MRC DTP would support students and take action if issues of bullying and harassment were raised.
- Those students that have sought support for issues of bullying / harassment have been either somewhat satisfied (1 student) or very satisfied (4 students) with the help received from the MRC DTP team.

### Action plan:

- The DTP leadership team will run a yearly session to the whole cohort to ensure all students are clear as to the Dignity at Warwick policy and the procedures and processes to follow if they experience or witness any incidents of bullying or harassment.

## Section 9 | Overall Satisfaction

### Summary:

- Students are overwhelming (98%) either satisfied or very satisfied with the MRC DTP In IBR program.

### Action plan:

- The DTP is pleased with overall student satisfaction with the doctoral training program but will continuously seek ways to improve the program and address areas of concerns identified in this survey.