



Irish Cancer Society Research

Summer Studentships 2023

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Summer Studentships 2023

Guidelines for Applicants

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The Irish Cancer Society Summer Studentships 2023 programme offers undergraduate students (who are not in their final year) the opportunity to undertake a cancer research project and to work with researchers in high-quality research environments. Virtual or desk-based projects will also be considered for this award, once they fulfil all eligibility criteria. This programme will give students the opportunity to gain research experience at an early stage in their career path. Students may apply for either a Translational Summer Studentship or a Social, Nursing and Allied Health Summer Studentship.

1.2. Indicative Timelines

Thursday 15 December 2023	Opening of call for applications
3pm Thursday 2 February 2023	Deadline for queries regarding project/degree eligibility
3pm Thursday 16 February 2023	Deadline for online submission of applications
Early-March 2023	Detailed review of applications
Early-April 2023	Outcome announced

Note: The above dates are provisional, subject to change at the discretion of the Irish Cancer Society.

1.3. Purpose and Objectives

The objective of this summer studentship programme is to provide undergraduate students (not in their final year) with the funding support required to conduct an 8-week cancer research project. The project may take a social nursing and allied health or translational research approach. The proposed research should take place in an experienced research group/lab or virtually. Upon completion of the project, the students will gain both a practical research experience and gain an insight into the cancer research environment.

Following the completion of the studentship, the student is required to provide the Irish Cancer Society with a written scientific report and a financial report. The financial report must be completed by the designated research finance office of the host institution.

1.4. Research Themes

All proposals must be aligned with the [Society's Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#) and its [Research Roadmap](#). Summer studentships will be awarded under two categories: Translational Summer Studentships and Social Nursing and Allied Health (SNAH) Summer Studentships.

Projects eligible for the Translational Summer Studentships should propose translational, clinical, or biomedical research. These can be defined as 'bench to bedside' or patient-focused biomedical research, the aim of which is to translate existing knowledge about cancer biology into techniques and tools that will accelerate progress towards patient treatment. Please note, applications in drug design, SAR (structure–activity relationship) analysis, drug screening or basic biomedical research will not be considered at this time.

Projects eligible for the Social Nursing and Allied Health Summer Studentships should propose research concerned with the period from diagnosis to treatment outcome (including palliative and end-of-life care). Survivorship research seeks to improve the care and outcomes experienced by people living with and beyond cancer. It includes (but is not limited to): prevention and early detection of recurrent cancer; long term effects of cancer and its treatment; quality and experience of treatment and care; psycho-social effects of cancer and its treatment; self-management; health information and literacy; genetic risk and counselling; physical and practical needs e.g., financial, employment, mobility; etc.

If you are not sure if your proposed project is eligible for either studentship, please feel free to contact us on before 3pm Thursday 2 February 2023 at grants@cancer.ie

1.5. Funding and Duration

The total amount available per award is €2,500 to support the student for a maximum period of eight weeks. For projects shorter than eight weeks, payment will be provided pro-rata. Funding for consumables is not provided. Payment to the student throughout the project will be made through the host institution. There are **four** Summer Studentships available in 2023. An effort will be made to award equally between the Translational and SNAH summer studentships.

2. Eligibility Criteria

2.1. Applicant Eligibility

Applications from individuals that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be assessed. Therefore, we strongly recommend you carefully read the following eligibility criteria and become familiar with the studentship requirements. The student is responsible for preparing the application with support from their supervisor.

Lead Applicant:

Minimum Eligibility Criteria:

- You must be a full-time or part-time undergraduate student who is **not** in final year of your degree
- You must be based in a university/third level institution in the Republic of Ireland
- You must have the support of an appropriate, suitably-qualified supervisor with relevant expertise in research in a HRB-approved university/third level institution within the Republic of Ireland
- You must identify a suitable HRB-approved host institution to administer the award. This must be the university/third-level institution of your academic supervisor
- You must undertake the studentship on a full-time basis for a maximum of eight weeks during the summer of 2023*
- You must be studying for a degree of relevance to the summer studentship you are applying for**

***Note:** Both full-time and part-time students are eligible to apply, however, you must be able to undertake the studentship on a full-time basis for a maximum of eight weeks during the summer of 2023. The period of research cannot overlap with academic term time.

****Note:** Applicants that are unsure about their degree eligibility, please contact grants@irishcancer.ie before 3pm Thursday the 2nd of February 2023 and we can advise.

The Lead Applicant **Must Not**:

- Be in the final year of your undergraduate degree course
- Have previously conducted a Masters or PhD
- Have held an Irish Cancer Society Summer Studentship previously
- Hold a summer studentship/internship/scholarship from another organisation at the same time during the summer of 2023

Note: Each student can only make one application to this studentship programme in this round. Where two applications are received from the same applicant, both will be deemed ineligible. Similarly, students cannot submit an application to both the SNAH and translational studentship. Where two students submit the same projects under the same supervisor in this round, both projects will be deemed ineligible. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria or do not meet the remit of the award will be deemed ineligible.

2.2. Institution Eligibility

The host institution must be the higher education institution where the academic supervisor is based. The host institution is the organisation that receives and administers grant funding and is responsible for compliance with all general and specific terms and conditions of awards.

In order to be eligible to apply for funding, a proposed host institution must be based in the Republic of Ireland and must be listed as an approved host institution on the Health Research Board's website:

<https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/hrb-policy-on-approval-of-host-institutions>

2.3. Academic Supervision

Supervision must be by a suitably-qualified individual with a good research track record in the research area. The academic supervisor must be affiliated to a HRB approved university/third-level institution within the Republic of Ireland.

Supervisors are eligible to supervise a summer student once they have appropriate experience. Supervisors must have a minimum of four years active research experience (career breaks, flexible working arrangements, change of disciplines or sector, etc., will be taken into consideration) and a good scientific track record. They must be in their current post for the duration of the proposed project and have secured the support of their institution.

The supervisor must guide the student during the studentship period so that they acquire the necessary skills to conduct the research project. The student is required to complete the proposed work and write a concise scientific report within the studentship timeframe.

Note: The student must identify their own supervisor. The Irish Cancer Society will not assist in the identification of supervision for a summer studentship application.

3. Application Procedure

3.1 Application Overview

There are two stages to the application process:

- i. Full application form review and shortlisting by panel of scientific reviewers.
- ii. Review of plain English summaries and the personal statements by non-scientific reviewers.

Note: The review process is a two-stage process. The full application form will be reviewed in stage 1 and the top applicants will be short-listed to progress to stage 2. Stage 2 will consist of a review of the plain English summaries and the personal statements by non-scientific reviewers (please see Section 7 for information on the assessment procedure). It is the non-scientific reviewers who will make the final decision on who should get funding, therefore, it is very important that the plain English abstract is written in non-technical language and is understandable to a non-scientific audience. Please see Appendix 1 for guidelines on writing a plain English abstract.

3.2 How to Apply

Prior to applying, you must read this document through to completion. Applications must be completed and submitted through the Irish Cancer Society online grant management system. In order to submit an online application you are required to register at the following address: <https://grants.cancer.ie>. When registering, please fill out all the fields on the registration form.

When you enter your login details, you will be directed to the portal homepage. From here, you can:

- i. Update your basic information (please make sure all fields are completed)
- ii. Make a new grant application
- iii. Access previous grant applications
- iv. Manage any active grants

When you have entered your basic details, you will be able to create a new application from the portal homepage. Alternatively, select 'New Application' from the 'My Applications' tab.

Next, click 'Apply' for the Grant Type detailed as 'Summer Studentship'. Applications must be completed and submitted by **3pm Thursday 16th February 2023***.

***Note:** Before the final submission of your application, the application must be approved by the supervisor on the online system. It is important that the student allows sufficient time for this process to be completed before the closing date as the system will automatically close at 3pm on the 16th of February, 2023.

4. Application Form

The following sections are outlined on the left-hand side of the page:

- a) Application Outline
- b) Applicant Details
 - i. Personal Statement
 - ii. Planned Research Outcomes
 - iii. Applicant's CV
- c) Supervisor
 - i. Add supervisor
 - ii. Supervisory Support Plan
 - iii. Proposed Supervisor's CV
 - iv. Declaration of Support – Supervisor
- d) Project Summary
- e) Plain English Summary
- f) Declaration of Support – Host Institution
- g) Validation Summary

Saving your progress regularly is strongly recommended by clicking 'Save' as you go through the application form. Alternatively, the information will be saved when you click 'Save and

Close'. By clicking 'Previous' you will be brought to the previous section and by clicking 'Next' you will be brought to the next section.

Mandatory sections are marked with a red circle icon. You will not be able to submit the application if these sections are incomplete.

Further details on each section of the application form:

a) Application Outline

- In this section, you will be asked to provide basic information about your application. Input and save the information as required under the following headings: Proposed project title
- Proposed start date – Must not be before June 2023
- Duration – Must be a maximum of 8 weeks (if less than 8 weeks is requested, payment will be pro-rata)
- Proposed research institution
- Cancer type(s)
- Keywords
- Research type
- Discipline(s)
- Overview of translational research - Please provide a brief description of how your research project is translational (50 words max).

b) Applicant Details

i. Personal Statement

The personal statement section should detail why you are applying for the studentship and why you are the best candidate **(300 words max)**.

The following must be covered:

- Reasons for pursuing a studentship in Translational **OR** SNAH cancer research (as appropriate);
- Reasons for choosing your proposed supervisor.

ii. Planned Research Outcomes

The studentships will give students the opportunity to work within a research group and gain research experience at an early stage in their career path. Please state and briefly explain the most significant techniques/skills/training that you are planning to acquire or develop during your summer studentship **(200 words max)**.

iii. Applicant's Curriculum Vitae

Please upload your CV – completed using the template provided (the template is downloadable in this section on the online system or on the website). More information on

each section is provided in the template. If the section is not relevant to you, please enter N/A.

Sections to be completed in the template include:

- Name
- Email address
- Corresponding academic address (i.e., of institution of study)
- Current institution of study
- Academic history
- Research experience (including publications, if any)
- Employment history

Please complete a table for **each year** of your qualification. For example, one table for Year 1, another table for Year 2 etc. Example of a completed Academic Qualifications table for one year of a degree:

Degree/Qualification	BSc Genetics
Year	2
From	01/09/21
To	01/06/22
Subjects	Molecular Genetics, Emerging Therapies, Drug Discovery and Development, etc.
Institute	University College Dublin (UCD)
Department/School/Division	Science
Country	Ireland
Grade	70% or GPA 3.1 (First Class)

c) Supervisor

i. Add Supervisor

You must add your **proposed** supervisor to the application. Your supervisor will have to **confirm their participation** in the application and **separately approve the application** after you submit it, before it is finally submitted to the Irish Cancer Society.

To add your supervisor, you can search by entering their email address. If the supervisor has already created an account, then they will appear on the list. To add them as your supervisor, click 'Select'. Please note that on saving, the contact will be added to the application as a supervisor and they will receive a notification of this via email.

If your supervisor does not already have an account, you can click 'Add a New Contact', and enter their name and email address. Please note that on saving, the contact will be added to the application as a supervisor. They will receive a notification of this via email.

ii. Supervisory Support Plan

The supervisor must guide you, the student, during the studentship to ensure that they acquire the necessary skills to conduct the research project. Please detail the plans for supervisory support that will be in place during your studentship **(200 words max)**.

This should include summary details of the following:

- The quality and level of supervision/mentorship that you will receive
- How accessible your supervisor will be throughout your project

iii. Supervisor's Curriculum Vitae

The supervisor's CV is required. Please upload the CV of your proposed supervisor. This CV should be completed using the template* provided (this template is downloadable in this section on the online system or on the website). Please ensure that you first have permission from your supervisor to include their CV.

***Note:** Please note this template is different to the Applicant CV Template.

iv. Declaration of Support - Supervisor

Please upload a declaration of support from your proposed supervisor. The Declaration of Support Template is downloadable from this section on the online system or on the website. This must be completed on headed paper.

Your supervisor should indicate why they are supporting your application, why you are suitable for this studentship, and express approval of your application.

d) Project Summary

Please give a summary of your proposed research project **(1000 words max)**. This should include summary details of the following:

- Background information/existing literature
- The hypothesis and the objectives
- Project plan
 - Methodology
 - Project timeline
- Summary and conclusions

e) Plain English Summary

Please provide a detailed and structured abstract, written in plain English **(400 words max)**.

The plain English abstract should include the following:

- A non-technical summary of your proposed research project
- Details of how your research objectives will have an impact, in particular how the research will benefit people affected by cancer

f) Declaration of Support – Host Institution

Please upload a declaration of support from the host institution. The Declaration of Support template is downloadable from this section on the online system or on the website.

The declaration of support is a letter stating that the host institution is aware of and supports the application.

g) Validation Summary

In this section, any required fields in the application form that have not been completed will be detailed. You will not be able to submit the application until all required fields are completed.

5. Submission of the Application

The application is ready for submission once the form has been validated on the validation summary page.

Once the application has been validated, it may be submitted by the lead applicant (i.e., the student).

The application will then be routed to any required signatories (i.e., the supervisor). The application will not be received by the Society until all signatories have approved it. All signatories must approve the application before the application deadline. **It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to ensure that signatories are given sufficient time to approve the application before the deadline.**

Applications must be received by the Society prior to the deadline. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Application Checklist:

- Application form
- Applicant's CV
- Proposed Supervisor's CV
- Declaration of Support – Supervisor
- Declaration of Support – Host Institution.

6. Application Assessment

The Irish Cancer Society bases its funding decisions on the recommendations of their review panels. However, the Society withholds the right to reject any funding application at its own discretion. Incomplete, ineligible, or late applications will be rejected by the Society and may not proceed to review.

6.1. Conflicts of Interest

The Society endeavours to ensure that reviewers are free of any conflicts of interest that might unduly bias the decision making process.

6.2. Assessment Procedure

Sections of the application will be assessed in the following way:

	Stage 1: Scientific Reviewers <i>The following will be assessed by scientific reviewers.</i>	Stage 2: Non-scientific Reviewers <i>Shortlisted projects will be reviewed by non-scientific reviewers.</i>
Full Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project summary • Plain English summary • Research experience (where applicable) • Applicant details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal statement ○ Planned research outcomes ○ Applicant’s CV • Supervisor details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervisory support plan ○ Proposed supervisor’s CV ○ Declaration of support – supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain English summary • Personal statement.

It is vital that the sections reviewed by the non-scientific panel are written in accessible English. Failure to do this may result in the reviewers being unable to accurately score and provide feedback on these sections of your application.

6.3. Assessment Outcome

Internal review scores and comments will be collated and all applications will be discussed at a review panel meeting. The review panel will select which applications should proceed to stage two review. At stage two, applicants will undergo review by non-scientific reviewers. Applicants will be informed of the outcome by email in April 2023. Reviewer feedback will be available to all applicants on request.

7. Contact

If you require assistance or have any queries about the application, please contact Niki Warner at grants@irishcancer.ie



1. Writing a Plain English Research Summary?

A plain English summary should provide a brief overview of the research proposal, written in a format appropriate and understandable to your audience. It should be written in a manner appropriate to your audience who **do not** have a scientific background. Therefore, ensure the summary is written in plain English (please see Section 2). However, an important consideration when writing a plain English abstract is to determine the right balance between pitching it to the correct audience and oversimplifying it. As such, the abstract should be written in clear plain English, but also adequately conveys the research question and what makes that particular research project important. The abstract may still have some '*jargon*' or scientific names when necessary, once they are clearly defined in understandable terms.

It is vital that you do not overstate the importance or impact of your research. Summaries that are not written in plain English, or that over-state the research's potential impact run the risk of not being selected.

Example of a Plain English Research Summary submitted as part of a Translational Summer Studentship Application:

Overall problem:

Trastuzumab is a drug used to treat a certain type of breast cancer called HER2+ breast cancer. This drug has been very successful in treating breast cancer. However, unfortunately, while Trastuzumab destroys a lot of breast cancer cells, there are some cancer cells that can still stay alive. When treatment does **not kill all cancer cells**, this is called **drug resistance**.

Background of the research proposal:

With the issue of Trastuzumab drug resistance in mind, we previously developed two types of breast cancer cells in the laboratory that represent the different ways that patients respond to Trastuzumab. One type being cells that die after Trastuzumab treatment and the other type are cells that do not die after Trastuzumab treatment. We previously compared hundreds of different ingredients in these two different types of cells. We found one particular ingredient that we believe to be involved in stopping Trastuzumab working.

What is the specific ingredient?

We found that the breast cancer cells that are resistant to Trastuzumab treatment are the only ones that **produce large amounts of the “Hypoxia-inducible factor-1-alpha (HIF-1 α)”** ingredient. We need to see if HIF-1 α is the “brains-of-the-operation” when it comes to Trastuzumab resistance.

What is HIF-1 α ?

Tumours can grow very fast, but, sometimes the walls surrounding the tumour cannot grow at the same speed and are faulty. Because of this, the tumours can become patchy and “leaky”. When this happens, oxygen can leak out of the tumour causing the conditions in the tumour and nearby area to become very harsh and unfavourable. But, cancer cells cleverly find ways to avoid the harsh conditions and they can become stronger and survive better. Cancer cells use HIF-1 α to make these unfavourable conditions within a tumour less harsh.

How are we addressing this problem?

Our **next steps** are to find out why the resistant cells are producing large amounts of HIF-1 α . We believe that Trastuzumab will work again if we stop the cells producing large amounts of this specific ingredient. We will test different drugs to shutdown HIF-1 α in the resistant cells. When we find the best drug to shut down HIF-1 α we will then test Trastuzumab’s ability to kill the cells. If Trastuzumab works again we will test the two drugs together to see if they work better together as a “**double therapy**”. The next step will be to try the two drugs in mouse models of HER2 breast cancer. Mice with resistant cancer tumours will be given either Trastuzumab alone or the two drugs together to see if the “double therapy” works best.

Our research will focus on trying to stop drug resistance occurring in patients in the first place and to try and make Trastuzumab better at treating breast cancer.

Example of a Plain English Research Summary submitted as part of a Social Nursing and Allied Health Summer Studentship Application:

Quality of life is a term used to describe how ‘good’ someone’s life is. It can be studied across different parts of someone’s life, such as their physical wellbeing or their relationships with other people. Unfortunately, when people are diagnosed with cancer and they begin treatment, sometimes their quality of life can change. An important question that research can answer is why it changes, and what can be done to improve a person’s quality of life.

One possible reason for the change in quality of life might be cognitive change. Cognitive change is another term for ‘*thinking skills*’, such as memory, language, attention, and problem solving. Some people going through cancer treatment might experience changes in how they think, for example, finding it difficult to remember information, or an inability to focus on everyday tasks. Cognitive change can be another side effect of treatment, which might impact a person’s quality of life.

The aim of this research study is to see if a person's cognition (thinking skills) impacts their quality of life (wellbeing).

This will be studied by asking people who are undergoing cancer treatment a series of questions. These questions will measure a person's cognition and their quality of life. The measurement of cognition will involve people completing a series of puzzle-like tasks involving words and pictures. The measurement of quality of life will involve people answering a series of questions about their life.

I plan to recruit 10 people for my study through advertisements on notice boards at the university and in the community. Once I have collected my data, I will run a statistical analysis on the scores to see if a person's cognitive score is related to their quality of life score.

The upkeep of quality of life is an important goal in cancer care. This study aims to answer why some people with cancer experience changes in their quality of life. If we understand better the reason for this change, we will be better placed to design ways to improve quality of life. For example, if we find that cognition is changing quality of life, then we can develop ways for people to overcome their cognitive change.

2. General Notes for Writing in Plain English

There are many online resources available to guide you in writing an effective plain English summary. Some of these resources are listed below. Here are some general notes on how to write in plain English:

- Avoid using technical language or scientific terminology. Use everyday words to communicate your point and explain the science. If you have to use scientific jargon, be sure to explain it thoroughly and be consistent in its use.
- Use short clear sentences.
- Use paragraphs.
- Use an active voice, and place the person/group/thing doing the action at the beginning. For example, use, '*We ran an experiment,*' rather than, '*The experiment was ran*'.
- Avoid using contractions (e.g., don't, can't, isn't). You can write in plain English without becoming too casual/unprofessional.
- Use an appropriate tone. This is not a newspaper article – the purpose is not to entertain.
- Make sure grammar, punctuation, and spelling are accurate.
- Bullet points (like these ones) can make it easy to digest a lot of information.

3. Research Impact

Broadly speaking impact is the demonstrable contribution that research makes to society. Impact can be defined as research being used to bring about a positive change to the lives of people affected by cancer. The impact research has is specific to each project and therefore, impact is varied and can occur over different timescales, from the short to long term.

Some of the key areas of research impact include:

- Academic impact;
- Health and health systems impact;

- Health-related and societal impact;
- Influence on policy making;
- Economic impact.

It is important to not overstate the impact of a research project but rather detail realistic goals and the potential that each project has for creating an impact.

It is recognised that for some research there will be no direct impact on the lives of people affected by cancer in the short or medium term. However, the research will contribute to a wider conversation on cancer with the view to eventually directly impacting the lives of those affected by cancer.

The inclusion of academic impact is also an important consideration when measuring research impact, as it demonstrates the contribution that a particular research project has made towards the advancement of science, and to the cancer research knowledgebase. These academic advances can be measured in terms of primary research related outputs and includes research publications, knowledge dissemination, capacity building, and collaborations.

4. Resources

General resources

INVOLVE – UK National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) initiative to support PPI.
<http://www.invo.org.uk>

NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency)
<https://www.nala.ie>

Access to Understanding: Promoting public understanding of biomedical and health research
<http://www.access2understanding.org>

Writing a Plain English Summary

Duke, M. (2012). How to write a lay summary.
<http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/HowToLaySummariesDec2012.pdf>

Communicating to patients

NHS England. Language Matters: Language and Diabetes.
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/language-matters.pdf>

Writing in plain English

NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency). *Writing and Design Tips*.
https://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Writing%20and%20Design%20Tips%202111_1.pdf