

Early Cancer Institute Summer Programme 2026

Application guidelines

6th July - 28th August 2026

The Early Cancer Institute Summer Programme will offer five paid 8-week research placements to selected talented Master's students who are currently registered at universities in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Please read these guidelines carefully before making your application.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply, students must be **entering their final year** of an **integrated Master's** course in a relevant subject at a UK Higher Education institute in **Autumn 2026**, or be accepted on a standalone **Master's course beginning in Autumn 2026**. Students **currently** in the final year of a Master's degree are **not eligible for the ECI Summer Programme**.

Relevant subjects include: biological or biomedical sciences, chemistry, computer science, engineering, mathematics, medicine and physics.

If your application is progressed and you are successful at interview and subsequently offered a place on the Programme, you would need to have the means of being able to enter and work in the UK.

Application Method

You must apply to this programme via the application form linked on the Early Cancer Institute website (<https://www.earlycancer.cam.ac.uk/early-cancer-institute-summer-programme-2026/apply-early-cancer-institute-summer-programme-2026>). We will not consider applications which are sent to us via other means.

Assessment Criteria

Applicants will be assessed competitively, on the basis of both academic achievement and academic potential in the context of their education to date.

Please note that you should be on course for a 1st or a 2i in your undergraduate degree, as evidenced by your referee.

Eligible applications are assessed on multiple factors, including the personal statement and academic potential. We collect information from applicants on key characteristics that are related to equal opportunities. This section of the form is voluntary, and information collected will form a confidential statistical record that will not be used for any purpose other than monitoring the Institute's performance in respect of equal

opportunities. The information entered in this section will not be used in assessing your application.

Application Dates

Application deadline: 15th February 2026, 23:59 GMT

Deadline for receipt of references: 25th February 2026

Brief conversation with selection panel: Early to mid-March 2026

Offers expected to be made: Late March 2026

The programme will operate a short waiting list in case any selected candidates are unable to take up their place. We will inform you if you are on this list.

Accommodation and Pay

Participants on the programme receive a payment in line with the UK Real Living Wage, for a 35-hour week. The programme duration is 8 weeks, and you must participate for the full 8 weeks. Participants will be provided with free-of-charge single accommodation at Hughes Hall college, for the duration of the programme including weekends. You are expected to live in this accommodation for the duration of the programme, other than in exceptional circumstances agreed with the programme organisers, and will be subject to college regulations whilst you are resident at the college accommodation.

Please note that you will be expected to arrive the weekend before the programme begins, on either Saturday or Sunday. We will send further information to those offered a place on the programme.

The programme will also include several additional events (such as career talks, presentations, and social events) which may take place outside normal laboratory hours. You are expected to attend these events, as part of your career - and cohort - development.

References

Your referee should be either a tutor or other academic at your current institution who knows you and your work well. This referee will be contacted automatically when you submit your application and will be asked to fill in a reference form, so please be sure they are happy to provide a reference before you submit your application.

The deadline for receipt of references is Wednesday 25th February 2026. Applications without references by the stated deadline will not be considered.

Previous Research Experience

Previous research experience is not necessary, and we encourage applications from students who have not had access to research opportunities and/or who are currently studying at higher education institutions where research or lab experience may not be as readily available as in more research-intensive institutions. However, please indicate within the Qualifications section on the Application Form if you have undertaken a placement or work experience in a research lab (and not part of your course) previously and provide a very brief description of it including date, duration, research group/company, topic investigated and activities carried out.

Research Projects of Interest

Please select two projects from the list of five. Please note that your choices are not ranked, and you may be offered either of the ones you choose. We will not be able to change your research project in the circumstance where you have been offered one and you have accepted it.

Further information on the projects can be found here:

https://www.earlycancer.cam.ac.uk/files/eci_summer_programme_2026_project_details.pdf

Qualifications

You will need to indicate your school qualifications and any key qualifications and exam results to date. Within this section please also indicate if you have previously undertaken a relevant work experience or placement in a research lab and provide details of this (see Previous Research Experience section for further guidance). This question is limited to max 300 words.

Personal Statement

The Personal Statement includes three separate questions (max 200 words each). Within these you will need to explain your motivation for applying to the Early Cancer Institute Summer Programme, how you will benefit from participation in the programme and how the programme aligns with your interests. Within this section you can also provide any additional information you would like to share with us (max 100 words).

Other Requirements in the Application Form

- Your personal details, including contact information
- Academic information, i.e. course and expected year of graduation
- How you heard about this programme

Online Interviews

We will invite shortlisted candidates for a ~15-minute online interview with a panel of academics in early to mid-March (date to be confirmed). The aim of these informal discussions will be to finalise the shortlist of applicants, the waitlist, and to find the best match between applicant and project. The conversation will focus principally therefore on your motivations for undertaking the programme and your research interests.

Data Protection Information about how we will use the information you provide in this application form can be found here <https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/how-we-use-participant-data>.