



## **MSci with Work Placement degrees in Life Sciences at Glasgow University (placements starting 2014 and beyond)**

The 5-year integrated MSci degrees with Work Placement in Life Science degrees at Glasgow University run in parallel with our 4-year Honours BSc degrees. The key difference between the BSc degrees and their MSci counterparts is the inclusion of a one year research-based work placement in a topic of broad relevance to the main degree subject, taken in Year 4. On completion of the placement year, our MSci students return for their final 5<sup>th</sup> year of study at Glasgow. In some industries this kind of placement year is referred to as a Sandwich year.

Please note that our students must write a research thesis derived from the research that they do on placement and that we assess this on their return. Therefore the nature of the “work” done on placement must include some research activity, but can also include some more generic tasks (see below).

We give our students advice on the format required for their report, but broadly it is a standard mini-thesis including introduction to the background science underpinning the topic (which requires the students to do literature reading in their own time), together with results, materials and methods, discussion and references. If this raises intellectual property issues, we can enter into Confidentiality agreements to permit our assessment of the student.

Additionally, during their work placement year our students are required to research in their own time and write a dissertation that relates to a scientific topic relevant to their degree. They are provided off-site tutoring with this task from Glasgow University. This task is distinct from their placement research report. The topic can (and often will be) unrelated to their placement research topic. However, if they wish and can find a Glasgow University tutor for the topic, they are permitted to study for their dissertation a topic that broadly relates to the subject area of their placement research topic so long as the focus is clearly distinct. The finished dissertation must be clearly different to the introduction and discussion of their research report and there should be no more than 1 or 2 cited references in common – if any.

### **The Placement Year:**

The placement must be 10-12 months long spent in full time work in an approved host Institution. Typically the host institution is a relevant science-based Industry, a Research



Institute, Hospital, Museum, Zoo or a University research lab. During the placement year the student remains a matriculated student of Glasgow University.

## **The nature of the work done and the placement research project:**

Critically the work done for the host organisation must include a significant component of research and this research must be a component of the host organisation's normal work; research that the host organisation is engaged in. The ownership of the research belongs to the host organisation and it is a component of their business. The student works to assist in that research. Therefore the topic of the research project is decided by the host institution; however when considering appropriateness, the following must be fulfilled. The student is required to write a research thesis which is assessed on their return by university staff. The student is also examined on their understanding of the research done by oral (viva) examination. The research project work performed while on work placement must broadly be within the field of their University Degree. The student's Level 3 taught course work should be a *reasonable* preparation for their understanding of the scientific background to the work placement research project. The grade they are awarded for their placement year constitutes 40% of their final degree grade, all of which is assessed by Glasgow University staff on the student's return.

## **Paid or Voluntary work.**

Many of our students are employed in year-long work placements within the pharmaceutical industry where these placements are part of the business model. That industry finds these students productive and they are used as a research labour force and flexible means of support for research teams within the industries. They are currently paid in the region of **£15,000 to £20,000** per year. Some major Research Institutes (Sanger, MRC NIMR) also pay in this region.

Students are permitted to work on a **voluntary** basis if they are able to self-fund. For some organisations this is necessary. For students travelling between European countries for work placement as a component of their degree, living support for the student can often be obtained via the Erasmus work placement programme, and Glasgow University can help with the organisation of this. Where the Erasmus funding on its own is not sufficient, it is acceptable to Erasmus for the student to receive an additional stipend from the host organisation to top up



their funding – so in these cases placements can be funded at relatively low cost to host organisations.

### **Other work done on Placement:**

While on placement, it is perfectly acceptable and usually quite normal for the student to perform non-research tasks for the host institute – work that is not part of their specific research project. Sometimes a student will contribute to more than one research project. This is quite compatible with typical University work placement degree programmes, so long as the student has sufficient time (probably at least 50% of full time effort) to direct towards their main research project. Where a student is working on a research project on a voluntary basis for a host organisation, if a significant amount of other non-research work for that organisation is required of them, this will normally be effort for which they are paid. Working on general tasks – serving the public, animal maintenance, laboratory organisation and management tasks etc., these can be forms of work used to financially support their work placement year.

### **Host support for the student:**

As stated above the host must provide a research project topic that broadly supports in the academic sense, the student's degree. The host must provide an in house supervisor for this research and the student must have adequate support to help them perform the research. This is standard supervisory support that can address issues of such as relevant research methodology, advice on use of relevant equipment, discussions and advice relating to data interpretation, problem solving and the overall direction of the project. The student is expected to learn appropriate methods and become relatively independent on a day to day basis, but this is very dependent on the nature of the project. The student is expected to think and develop relevant research skills of use to and valued by the host organisation while on placement. The level of support given by the host supervisor must reflect the level of experience of the student – they will have completed three years of a science degree at the time of going on placement.



## **Academic Support from the University:**

While on placement, each student has a university mentor who can provide them with advice on issues such as preparing their written report. If the host institute has any questions regarding suitability of a particular area of research, this can be obtained from the MSci degree course coordinator (or a deputy) at Glasgow University. The student is also required to continue and complete additional distance learning tasks in their spare time (evenings, weekends) during the placement year. This is entirely organised by the University.

## **Selection of students to the MSci degree at Glasgow:**

The selection process to the MSci degree programme at Glasgow is very competitive. Selection is after completion of the first two years of study at Glasgow. Students must have performed at an academic level that predicts probable final degree grade of 1<sup>st</sup> Class or Upper 2<sup>nd</sup> Class; i.e., those students we think are likely to be capable of studying for a PhD after graduation. Their academic performance and personal statements are assessed by a panel, and the strongest applicants are then further assessed by interview. Throughout this selection procedure the key criteria for success are academic performance, understanding of research in their relevant field, an interest in research as a potential future career and evidence of sufficient maturity to work successfully outside the university. These members of academic staff involved in the selection of students are focused on the role of the successful students as ambassadors for the University.

## **For additional information, contact:**

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