Welcome to the EMBL Scientific Visitor Programme

EMBL performs fundamental research in molecular biology, studying the story of life. We offer services to the scientific community, train the next generation of scientists and strive to integrate the life sciences across Europe.

We are international, innovative and interdisciplinary. We are more than 1600 people, from over 80 countries, operating across six sites in Barcelona (Spain), Grenoble (France), Hamburg (Germany), Heidelberg (Germany), Hinxton (UK) and Rome (Italy). Our scientists work in independent groups and conduct research and offer services in all areas of molecular biology.

Our research drives the development of new technology and methods in the life sciences. We work to transfer this knowledge for the benefit of society.

Every year EMBL welcomes scientists and students from all over the world who establish collaborations with group leaders across our research units.

These scientific visitors range from trainees seeking to gain experience with the best scientists in the world to principal investigators who wish to carry out a specific project. Others come for a period of study and reflection. Access to our broad seminar and conference programme often enrich a scientist’s stay with us.

The scientific visitor programme provides visitors with logistical and organisational support, to make their stay at EMBL a productive and pleasant experience.

EMBL International Centre for Advanced Training

The scientific visitor programme is supported by the EMBL International Centre for Advanced Training (EICAT), which coordinates integrated training activities for scientists at different levels at all six EMBL sites. EICAT supports one of EMBL’s core missions, the provision of advanced training.

EICAT also manages the international PhD and Postdoctoral programmes and delivers an outstanding programme of courses and conferences. Find out more about these via the EMBL website: embl.org
Guide to the Scientific Visitor Programme

How to apply

If you would like to apply to become a scientific visitor at EMBL, please contact the Group Leader of your choice directly. Information about our research groups, including contact details, is available via the EMBL website: embl.org

Acceptance to the programme will depend on the availability of places, ongoing projects, and manpower in the respective lab. There are no specific deadlines but early planning facilitates administration, such as housing or visa applications.

Your application letter should include:

- your CV highlighting your research experience so far
- a short statement about your research interests and why you are interested in the chosen group
- information about the purpose and intended duration of your internship
- contact details for a faculty member at your home institute who is prepared to support your candidature
- information about the funding situation for your visit

Accommodation

EMBL supports scientific visitors in finding accommodation. Scientific visitors to EMBL’s main site in Heidelberg may use the ISG Hotel in the nearby Boxberg. Single and double rooms are available as well as apartments in the Guesthouse, all in walking distance from the laboratory. A free shuttle also operates in the mornings and in the evenings.

ISG-Hotel Heidelberg
Im Eichwald 19, 69126 Heidelberg
Tel: +49 6221 3861-0
www.isg-hotel.de
Research Units

EMBL Heidelberg, Germany

Cell Biology and Biophysics

From eggs to neurons, cells take on very different shapes and sizes to fulfill their role. Scientists in the Cell Biology and Biophysics Unit investigate the molecular and biophysical mechanisms that enable cells to function. In the Unit, biologists, chemists and physicists probe molecular networks and machines as well as mechanical forces and signaling. Experts in optics work with biologists to develop new imaging technologies to visualise life’s molecular machinery at work.

s.embl.org/cbb

EMBL Heidelberg, Germany

Developmental Biology

Development is a feat of coordination. Precisely timed molecular interactions regulate cells’ fate and behavior, dictating the embryo’s morphology and physiology. Scientists in the Developmental Biology Unit aim to understand the principles behind these processes. They combine imaging, biochemistry and genome engineering, and develop new methods, from optogenetic techniques to reporter lines. They apply these approaches to a variety of model organisms, revealing how life is shaped during development and evolution.

s.embl.org/db

EMBL Heidelberg, Germany

Genome Biology

Many of our traits stem from the information in our genome. This information must be expressed at the right place and time. This entails strict regulation at multiple steps, including transcriptional, post-transcriptional and post-translational. Scientists in the Genome Biology Unit take an integrated multi-tiered approach to study these processes, and how their alteration leads to disease. They combine wet-lab and computational research, and work closely with colleagues in the Genomics and Proteomics Core Facilities to understand the molecular processes leading from genotype to phenotype.

s.embl.org/gb
Structural and Computational Biology

Life in the Structural and Computational Biology Unit is all about interactions; from the molecular networks inside cells to the ecological relationships between species, via the collaboration between experts from different fields. Scientists in the Unit cover everything from crystallography to cryo-EM, metabolomics to microbiomes. They support colleagues throughout EMBL in the use of state-of-the-art structural biology instruments. The Unit also serves as a hub for bioinformatics activities across EMBL Heidelberg.

s.embl.org/scb

EMBL Heidelberg, Germany

Heidelberg Core Facilities

Molecular life science requires a suite of sophisticated techniques – from high-end microscopes to protein production platforms and next-generation sequencers – and the expertise to make the most of them. At the Core Facilities, experts support scientists in designing, running and refining experiments. They help researchers make sense of results. Core Facilities staff work closely with technology developers, and are always aware of the latest advances in their field. They enable scientists from across EMBL and beyond to achieve ambitious research goals in a cost effective way.

s.embl.org/cf
EMBL Barcelona, Spain

Tissue Biology and Disease Modelling

An organ or a tissue is much more than just a collection of cells. It has genetic patterns, specific cell types, a three-dimensional structure and arrangement. Scientists at EMBL Barcelona trace the connections between these scales. They unveil how tissues develop, work, regenerate and heal. Thanks to the site’s imaging facilities, researchers can observe, manipulate and model how changes in genes percolate through cells, tissues and organs, in health and disease.

s.embl.org/bcn

EMBL Grenoble, France

Structural Biology

The three-dimensional shape of a molecule can tell you a lot about what the molecule does – and how it might be blocked. Scientists at EMBL Grenoble study how proteins interact with genomes, based on their 3D structure. Researchers in the Unit work closely with instrumentation developers and colleagues across campus to obtain the best possible data from the state-of-the-art X-ray beamlines at the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF).

s.embl.org/gr

EMBL Hamburg, Germany

Structural Biology

Proteins are key components of the cell’s workforce. Alone or in sets, they can fine-tune genes, break down bacteria, or make muscles contract. At EMBL Hamburg, scientists unveil the structure of proteins that impact human health. Researchers in the Unit use state-of-the-art infrastructures for integrative structural biology available on the DESY campus. They investigate how these crucial molecules act, and assess how to use that information to develop new therapies.

s.embl.org/hh


Bioinformatics

Researchers at EMBL-EBI are transforming life science. They are making sense of the vast, complex datasets produced using new and emerging technologies in molecular biology. Their work spans sequence analysis methods, multi-dimensional statistical analysis and data-driven biological discovery. At EMBL-EBI, researchers work closely with experimental scientists worldwide, increasingly tackling problems of direct significance to medicine and the environment.

Bioinformatics Services

EMBL-EBI maintains the world’s most comprehensive range of freely available molecular data resources. Developed in collaboration with colleagues worldwide, EMBL-EBI’s databases and tools help scientists share data efficiently, perform complex queries and analyse the results in different ways. The service teams’ work supports millions of wet-lab and computational biologists working in all areas of the life sciences, from biomedicine to biodiversity and agri-food research.

Epigenetics and Neurobiology

How do you perceive the world around you? Can our surroundings influence our genes, and our children’s? At EMBL Rome, scientists explore the connections between genome, environment and neural function. Traditionally, neuroscientists and epigeneticists have moved in different circles. Here, they come together, and draw on each other’s insights, approaches and experience.
Who’s a visitor?

Trainee

An undergraduate student from a university or professional school wanting to perform practical work by doing an internship outside of the formal arrangement of an undergraduate thesis. Undergraduate students generally do not receive any remuneration for their work, but may obtain a limited participation towards housing and subsistence upon discretion of the hosting group leader. Trainees must be at least 18 years old to be eligible for training at EMBL. The total stay may not exceed 12 months.

Master Student

An undergraduate student from a university or professional school wanting to perform practical work in order to establish their master thesis (or equivalent) in collaboration with the laboratory. Undergraduate students generally do not receive any remuneration for their work, but may obtain a limited participation towards housing and subsistence upon discretion of the hosting group leader. The total stay may not exceed 12 months.

Master / Bachelor graduated

Someone who has successfully completed their Master or Bachelor programme and is no longer enrolled at a university.

Visiting Predoctoral Fellow

A PhD student who is registered with an external institution for their PhD thesis and is not part of the EMBL International PhD Programme. The student wishes to benefit from EMBL technologies and methods for specific parts of their thesis. Visits of more than 6 months need prior approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The maximum total training period at EMBL, including any extensions, must be less than half of the entire PhD period.

Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow

A postdoctoral fellow with a contract elsewhere visiting EMBL for a short-term project.

Visiting Researcher

External staff scientist holding a PhD and working above postdoctoral level but below a group leader.

Visiting Technical Expert

All technical assistants and other technical experts (e.g. scientific IT experts).

Visiting Group Leader

Faculty at research institutions coming to EMBL for scientific purposes to pursue collaboration with EMBL staff.
Testimonials

Karen Sørensen, Norway

My impression of EMBL, Heidelberg, during my 2 month visit, is a unique combination of scientific excellence, and a friendly and collaborative atmosphere.

*Visiting Principal Investigator in the Cell Biology and Biophysics Unit, EMBL Heidelberg*

Ana-Matea Mikecin, Croatia

During my PhD and postdoctoral training I have visited several institutes around the globe, however, none of them can match hospitality and the scientific atmosphere that EMBL Heidelberg has. From day one I was engaged in the most fruitful yet informal discussions about both my project and other people’s. My visit to EMBL, though rather brief, had an immense influence on the development of my project. In the end, I hope that in the future I will be given an opportunity to return to EMBL and thrive in such inspiring surroundings.

*Visiting Researcher in the Core Facilities, EMBL Heidelberg*

Almagul Kushugulova, Kazakhstan

Thank you for a simply divine time! EMBL is a perfect place to do the best research. Your hospitality was superb! I hope I will be back! I got the necessary experience, new ideas and impetus for new achievements. I realised the main rule for success: make the best the ideal!

*Visiting Researcher in the Structural and Computational Biology Unit, EMBL Heidelberg*
EBI provided the best possible intellectual environment and academic support for my research and career development during my time here. Furthermore, my line manager at EBI provided the most productive guidance, supervision and long lasting mentorship that will benefit me for my entire life. I treasure this valuable experience tremendously. I would strongly recommend you to become a visiting PhD student in the EBI, if you have the opportunity to do so.

*Visiting Predoctoral Fellow at EMBL-EBI Hinxton*

Tim Xiaoming Hu, Singapore

I arrived in Grenoble to determine the structure of two proteins. EMBL took care of everything, so as soon as I arrived I could start working on my project and didn’t have to take care of accommodation or reagents. The atmosphere was very good, and the group that I visited was very friendly and helpful. The stay was extremely productive, since I used state of the art technology in crystallography and returned home with the structure of one of my targets. This experience had a great impact on my professional and personal life.

*Visiting Predoctoral Fellow at EMBL Grenoble*

Ignacio Fernandez, Argentina

EBI provided the best possible intellectual environment and academic support for my research and career development during my time here. Furthermore, my line manager at EBI provided the most productive guidance, supervision and long lasting mentorship that will benefit me for my entire life. I treasure this valuable experience tremendously. I would strongly recommend you to become a visiting PhD student in the EBI, if you have the opportunity to do so.

*Visiting Predoctoral Fellow at EMBL-EBI Hinxton*

Itai Toker, Israel

I visited a group with which we have a fruitful collaboration. Everybody at EMBL and at the lab was very welcoming. The state-of-the-art animal and imaging facilities allowed our project to make a substantial leap forward, and I had the chance to attend excellent seminars given by prominent scientists during my stay. Overall, it was a pleasant and very valuable visit.

*Visiting Predoctoral Fellow at EMBL Rome*
My stay at EMBL gave me the great opportunity to research in an international, welcoming environment. It was a great place to grow as a scientist.

Trainee in the Genome Biology Unit, EMBL Heidelberg

Georgios Misailidis, Greece

A highly active and advanced scientific society with a strong sense of collaboration towards better science.

Trainee in the Developmental Biology Unit, EMBL Heidelberg

Caroline Eigner, Austria

I felt really welcomed by everybody at EMBL-Hamburg and have learned more than I could have wished for. The international community, with people from all around the world sharing their personal and scientific experience made my stay even more special! I am leaving EMBL with a suitcase full of new scientific skills, stories about different countries and cultures, and also new friendships!

Trainee at EMBL Hamburg
Contact

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