



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of
Biomedical Engineering
Faculties of Applied Science
and Medicine



Living Systems
Institute

UBC SBME - Exeter LSI PhD Student Exchange Program

Program Guide

Quick Facts

The University of British Columbia School of Biomedical Engineering (UBC SBME) and the University of Exeter's Living Systems Institute (LSI) are pleased to announce its new PhD Student Exchange program. This collaboration offers SBME and LSI PhD students a unique opportunity to complete a research visit and engage in interdisciplinary research with world-class scientists from both institutions. Through the joint PhD program and exchange, students can gain access to cutting-edge facilities, broaden their research perspectives, and develop valuable international networks. Additionally, they will benefit from exposure to diverse research environments and methodologies, which will enrich their academic training and enhance their career prospects in the growing field of biomedical engineering.

Value: \$8,500 CAD to UBC SBME students traveling to Exeter LSI
£5,000 GBP to Exeter LSI students travelling to UBC SBME

Term: Applicants may request up to **8 weeks** of support.

Program Objectives

The UBC SBME – Exeter LSI PhD Exchange Program will provide PhD students with an opportunity to work with a supervisor on a research project. The key aim of the program is to foster collaboration, develop research skills, and provide students with meaningful experience with projects aligned with the academic and strategic priorities of both institutions.

The specific objectives of the program are to:

1. Support high-quality research activities to increase research productivity biomedical engineering.
2. Provide PhD students with practical research experience in an international and interdisciplinary academic environment.
3. Foster cross-institutional collaborations and academic development.

We aim to generate exceptional research and teaching; to connect our talented researchers, educators, and higher education professionals in efforts to solve problems particular to our regional contexts. The approach recognizes the excellent foundations and existing linkages shared between UBC SBME and Exeter LSI faculty.

About UBC's SBME: Created in 2017 through a partnership between the Faculties of Applied Science and Medicine, and enabled by the leadership of British Columbia's provincial government, the [School of Biomedical Engineering \(SBME\)](#) is Canada's living laboratory for new models of convergent research and education. SBME's Vision is for transformed health and healthcare for all, achieved through innovative research and education at the convergence of



engineering, medicine and biology. Read our [Strategic Plan from 2025-2030](#) to find out how we are making that world a reality, and how by 2030 we will position SBME as a globally recognized leader in biomedical engineering.

About Exeter's Living Systems Institute: The [Living Systems Institute \(LSI\)](#) at the University of Exeter, located in Exeter, UK, is an interdisciplinary research hub that brings together scientists from a range of fields, including biology, physics, and mathematics, to tackle complex biological problems. The institute is known for its cutting-edge research into how living systems function, from the molecular to the organismal level, and for developing innovative biomedical solutions. PhD students participating in the exchange program will benefit from LSI's world-class research facilities, such as stem cell culture facilities, cryo-electron microscopy and advanced biosensing technologies, while collaborating with internationally recognized experts in areas like stem cell research, microbiome studies, and computational biology.

<u>UBC SBME Research Themes</u>	<u>University of Exeter LSI Research Themes</u>
Cellular and Molecular Engineering Engineering genomes, cellular communication pathways, and tissue environments to advance fundamental biology and cell-based therapeutics.	Mathematics of Life Developing and analysing mathematical models to explain and predict function and dysfunction in biological systems.
Imaging and Computational Biology Developing advanced analytics and imaging technologies to integrate biomedical data from cells to whole body for improved health outcomes.	Physics of Life Uncovering the fundamental physical principles that govern the dynamic organisation of living systems.
Human Interfacing Devices Designing therapeutic delivery systems, nanodevices, and biosensors to integrate technology with human biology.	Engineering Life Reverse engineering biological phenomena from molecular and cellular components.

Benefits to Participating:

- **Interdisciplinary Training:** This joint PhD program will provide students with access to a wealth of interdisciplinary expertise and research environments, allowing them to gain skills and knowledge beyond what they may typically encounter at a single institution.
- **Research Exchanges:** This PhD student exchange program will offer selected students the chance to spend up to 2 months at Exeter or SBME, working in their state-of-the-art facilities, collaborating with world-class researchers, and experiencing a different academic culture. These exchanges are designed to broaden their research perspectives and enhance their academic careers.
- **Networking and Development:** Through virtual seminars, poster sessions, and joint research activities, students will have early opportunities to connect with peers at Exeter and SBME, build international networks, and gain experience presenting their work in a collaborative setting.



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Student Eligibility

- The UBC SBME – Exeter LSI PhD Exchange Program is open to PhD students currently enrolled at either UBC SBME or at the University of Exeter and supervised by an LSI PI.
- Applicants must demonstrate academic excellence.
- Students must meet any additional eligibility requirements specific to the research project.
- Students must be in good standing with home institution and eligible to go on exchange from the start date for the duration of the program.
- UBC SBME students travelling to Exeter register with the [UBC Safety Abroad Registry](#).
- Exeter LSI students travelling to UBC must register with the [UBC Visiting International Research Students program](#) and pay applicable fees through program funding.

Funding details

Value: \$8,500 CAD to UBC SBME students traveling to Exeter LSI
£5,000 GBP to Exeter LSI students travelling to UBC SBME

Term: Applicants may request **up to 8 weeks** of support.

Number of opportunities: at least 6 students (3 students/institution)

Cost Eligibility

Applicants should develop a budget that is accurate as successful applicants will be required to abide by official reporting, insurance and registration requirements as outlined in [UBC](#) and [Exeter](#) policies.

Eligible costs include:

- Subsistence costs (meals and accommodation) for the student.
 - Note: UBC students must adhere to the meals per diem for international travel outline [here](#) and LSI students will need to adhere with standard University of Exeter expenses policies.
- Public transportation fees for travel made to and from the workplace for the student.
- Air travel, which must be claimed at the most economical rate available.
- Travel cancellation insurance, seat reservation charges, and 1 checked bag fee.
- Travel health insurance for the student if they do not receive any such benefits from their institution and/or other source.
- Safety-related expenses for field work, such as protective gear, immunizations, etc.
- Entry visa fees when required for the exchange.
- For Exeter LSI students coming to UBC: Go Global Visiting International Research Student (VIRS) program fee (CAD \$431.50) and iMED health insurance (CAD \$79/month + \$10.95 direct billing fee)



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- UK Healthcare surcharges (if applicable): UBC students visiting Exeter may have be responsible for a healthcare surcharge depending on their visa type. More information about visiting the UK as a standard visitor can be found [here](#).

The following items are not eligible for funding under this scheme:

- Student fees / tuition. Students are to continue paying for their home institution student fees/tuition for duration of exchange.
- Salaries and benefits. Students are to continue being paid their usual stipends from their home institution.
- Third-party travel costs.
- Publication costs.
- Meeting, venue, and catering costs at host institution.
- Indirect costs, estates/capital costs, and overheads.
- Bench fees, consumables and internal research facilities (it is expected that these would be covered by the hosting research group or organization as appropriate).
- Passport fees.
- Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer points programs.

Resources

The successful student will be considered a visiting research student at the host institution per the [UoE](#) and [UBC](#) guidelines. Students may be granted access to resources at the host institution such as research facilities, libraries, and other resources including wellbeing and accommodation support.

Application Process

Each year, PhD and Postdoctoral students wishing to undertake collaborative work with the host institution must submit a full proposal by the deadline. Applicants are to fill out the application form and submit via Qualtrics. A complete application includes the following components:

- Application form
 - Research proposal (max 1000 words) and appendix (if needed, max 1 additional page, not included in word count)
 - Work cited (no limit)
 - Quality of the student (max 500 words)
 - Quality of the environment (max 500 words)
 - Budget form
 - Home supervisor approval
 - Host supervisor approval
- Application form and submission portal can be found on the [program website](#).



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The duration of each exchange will be determined based on project requirements, but support for up to 8 weeks can be requested. Applicants will need to obtain approval from the supervisor of their home institution, the host supervisor, as well as the authorized signatories from their Department/Unit at the time of submission. It is critical to check with the existing supervisor at the home institution and the potential host supervisor as early as possible to ensure the proposal is developed with their support and approvals are in place at the time of application.

For your application to be considered complete, both the home and host supervisor must submit their approvals. Please ensure that you submit the application well before the deadline to ensure time for these approvals.

Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Description
Quality of the Proposed Research or Creative Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Completeness of the background and literature review.2. Quality and originality of the questions and strategic importance of the proposal to address knowledge gaps in a key thematic focus area.3. Clarity of goals, research design, and methods.4. Feasibility of the project and appropriateness of the project timeline, including the timeliness of the visit.5. Identification of potential risks that may arise during the project and mitigation strategies.6. Appropriateness of the results and processes to generate new knowledge and make an impact.
Quality of the Student	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Qualifications and previous training and experience of the applicant to undertake the activities described in the proposal.2. Evidence of leadership through contributions to the research field, in addition to curricular and/or professional contributions.3. Evidence of generating knowledge that is creative/original and of high quality.
Quality of the Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Alignment of the proposed activities with existing research activities performed by the host supervisor.2. Availability of resources (personnel, facilities, and equipment) to achieve research goals and ensure the success of the work.3. Evidence of mentorship and adequacy of the mentorship plan to support the student towards developing a personalized and world-class international student experience.

Important Dates

Date	
Late December 2025	Call for applications issued
February 19, 2026	Full application deadline
End of February 2026	Anticipated notice of funding decision
First week of March 2026	Anticipated start of funding / earliest project start date



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July 31, 2026	Latest project end date (complete exchange and expenditure)
1 month after return to home institution	Final report submission deadline

Contacting the Host Institution

If you are interested in making an application for the UBC SBME – Exeter LSI PhD Student Exchange Program, but you require support in contacting potential supervisors at the Host Institution, Exeter Students should please contact info@exeter.ac.uk and UBC students should please contact melody.salehzadeh@ubc.ca for advice.

Please consult the [list of faculty members who have expressed interest in participating](#) in the program. This list is not exhaustive; it is acceptable to reach out and contact other [SBME/LSI](#) faculty members not listed.

Support with setting up

You can seek advice from the Host partner on matters of accommodation in either the Exeter or Vancouver areas, but please note that the Host institutions cannot secure your accommodation for you and do not have visiting housing available on campus through the institution. You may consider short-let apartments or hotels, and the Host institution can advise locations and travel time to and from campus.

Please contact the Host institution if you have any questions on IT resources that might be available to you, access to physical office space, and staff support during your visit. Please note that the expectation would be that you are physically engaged at the Host institution campus for the duration of the program and working with your Host supervisor.

In your application, you will be asked to confirm that you have the support of the Department Director of Postgraduate Research for University of Exeter students or your Program, Unit or Division Head for UBC students to undertake this research exchange.

Upon completing your travel, you will be asked to complete a brief Narrative and Expenditure Report outlining your activities and costs incurred throughout your visit. You may also be asked to be available during future cycles of the Exeter LSI-UBC SBME PhD student Exchange Program to share your experiences and advice with prospective students.

Forms

Application form and application submission portal can be found on the [program website](https://bme.ubc.ca/research/sbme-lsi-phd-exchange-program/) (<https://bme.ubc.ca/research/sbme-lsi-phd-exchange-program/>).

Conditions for Funding Holders

To remain eligible for this fellowship, students must remain registered as a full-time student for each term of the fellowship payment. Students must register in their thesis course in each term



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of their studies to ensure that they maintain full-time status. Exeter students visiting UBC must register with the [Go Global Visiting International Research Students \(VIRS\)](#) program.

Funding acquittal and reporting

Student fund holders must agree to adhere to all requirements related to the receipt of funding including deadlines and procedures for acquittal of funds and reporting on outcomes.

Student fund holders will have to utilize the funds for the project by the end of July 31st, 2026. Funds that are not utilized within the specified period will not be disbursed. Within 1 month of the exchange's completion, students will be required to submit a brief report outlining the project's successes and outcomes. Report forms will be provided. This report will be utilized for the follow-up of potential opportunities, reporting on outcomes, and to highlight successes of the initiative between UBC SBME & Exeter LSI.

We recommend that the student coordinate with their home department to have major expenses (e.g., airfare and accommodations) charged directly to their home institution. Subsistence costs (e.g., meals) should be paid by the student during the exchange and reimbursed afterward with receipts. However, if the student prefers to charge all expenses to their personal accounts and request reimbursement for the full amount at the end of the exchange, that is also acceptable. Expense claims made without receipts are likely to be declined.

Students who embark on international travel are required to abide by official reporting, insurance and registration requirements of their home institution as outlined in:

[Exeter policies](#)

[UBC travel support](#) & [UBC Go Global VIRS Budgeting](#)

- Funding is only provided for the activities detailed in the application, unless by prior agreement.
- Expenditure must not exceed the value of the funding agreement.
- Details of the funding agreement will be listed on the University of Exeter Global Partnerships, or the UBC SBME and Go Global websites as appropriate.
- The home institution may contact funding holders to monitor progress and expenditure.
- A final project report and financial acquittal will need to be completed and submitted within one month of returning to home institution after visit.

Further Information

Please consult your home institution contacts if you would like any additional information.

Exeter: Stuart Westhead (Global Partnerships Regional Head – North America & Europe)
S.westhead@exeter.ac.uk; Global Partnerships GP-Funding@exeter.ac.uk

UBC SBME:

Melody Salehzadeh (UBC SBME Research Manager) melody.salehzadeh@ubc.ca;
UBC Office of Global Engagement, Go Global <https://goglobal.ubc.ca/contact>