

IMPERIAL

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP)

Slides provided by Adrian Hawksworth,
UROP Manager, Registry



What is UROP?

UROP provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to participate in real research.

- In a research-led education UROP provides a framework for students to improve their understanding of the research environment; to gain an extra opportunity to extend research skills and interests.
- Over 10,000 students have participated since 1980. **In 2025 : c.660 registered participants (580 Imperial undergraduates)**
- Open to eligible undergraduates at Imperial and other UK universities. **Academic staff most commonly collaborate with students in the middle years of their degree. UROPs are not guaranteed. Final year undergraduates will continue to be able to participate in 2026** (but their continued participation beyond 2026 will be subject to further review.)
- Typical UROPs take place in the summer vacation for **6-10 weeks. Ordinarily on campus, but supervisors can agree to a hybrid or wholly remote format IF it suits the research being pursued. A supervisor might agree to structure a UROP with breaks so as to accommodate their availability or your need for a holiday.**
- “**Applications**” (approaches) are made by students direct to staff (academic/research), since UROPs are not often advertised. **The focus is often on negotiating opportunities, possibly as a consequence of building a network over a period of time, therefore, some students may find sourcing a UROP relatively easy compared to others.**
- **Mandatory bursaries from 2026:** For a department (in any faculty) to register a UROP, a bursary [for the student] must have been sourced (as a *guide: in 2025 this was c.£407 per week: max £450 p/w*). **Family/Personal funding does not qualify as a source.** See last slide for further guidance.

How do the hosts of UROPs benefit?

Supervisors and their research groups can see it as an opportunity, for example...

- to host highly motivated, capable and enthusiastic students with the potential to make contributions to their research.
- to bring in extra support and appropriate skill sets at relevant times.
- to undertake speculative research (in a low-risk environment).
- to introduce fresh perspectives.
- to build relationships with potential PhD students.
- to allow non-academic team members (e.g. PhD students) to have some experience of day-to-day supervision (of UROP students).



What do students get from UROP?

UROP participants can ...

- further their academic & practical interests.
- contribute real-time to a field of research.
- learn new skills &/or enhance current skills.
- learn how research groups operate.
- engage with staff on speculative experiments.
- focus on their degree specialism **or** move out of their comfort zone by crossing disciplinary boundaries.
- acquire ideas for final-year projects.
- inform & influence their choice of PhD (perhaps rule out a PhD, i.e. not for me).
- obtain useful vacation experience which may help with applications for further external vacation internships. Some students will do multiple UROPs over the length of their degree (perhaps including spells at other universities). It's CV development territory.



UROP : effective research experiences

A UROP (“research experience”) should aim to embrace the following:

- **“Funding”** (bursary for the student) : Mandatory if the UROP is to be registered by the host department. A supervisor and student should discuss and then work together to secure a bursary for the student.
- **“Planning”**
 - with the “supervisor”: to decide upon a project or workflow with realistic & achievable objectives with a view to managing a student’s expectations ahead of the UROP commencing.

Participants (student and supervisor) must view a UROP as an introduction to the research environment. While for some the fruits may be beyond a student’s wildest dreams (a co-authored paper perhaps), for many the more commonplace experience will be the utilisation and development of skills.

- for the “supervisor” to make themselves available for constructive contact prior to the research experience commencing although this does not necessarily need to translate to a lot of time. For the supervisor to consider the practical aspects of providing the UROP.
- **“Induction”**: an organised induction (“first day”).
- **“Integration” (so obviously important to a “research experience”)**: to welcome & maintain a student as part of the research group/lab (however large or small)
- **“Supervision”**: to provide (and maintain throughout) effective and accessible supervision on a day-to-day basis (perhaps one person; perhaps several).
- **“Outcomes”**: to be clear in due course as to how the student can best present the results of their efforts. This does not have to be a technical report. Outputs vary, such as a presentation to the group.

The impact of UROP?

Feedback has shown that students were enthusiastic about:

- Being given responsibility
- Being challenged
- Enjoying the independence
- Feeling accepted as a part of a team
- Interacting with PGs & Post-docs
- Insights into career pathways
- Insights into laboratory procedures
- Gaining more experience
- Using unfamiliar equipment



“gaining vital lab experience & feeling that you contributed to the work was great”

“it was difficult to start the project from scratch but I think the work would have been a lot less rewarding and less interesting if I had just been given an existing project.”

Any Questions?

- **Consult:** www.imperial.ac.uk/urop

There is an INFORMATION SHEET:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/urop/how-to-get-involved/>

- Consider the case studies [“perspectives”] of past participants: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/urop/what-is-urop/student-perspectives/>
- Review eligibility & the “application” advice (building your network and making approaches).
- If you source a UROP there is a **registration process**
- Puzzled about anything? Email: urop@imperial.ac.uk
- **Summer 2026 bursaries:** insight via <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/urop/how-to-get-involved/funding/>
 - **Important:** eligibility, timelines & deadlines may vary significantly from one bursary source to another so read info very carefully. Also speak to your own dept who may manage local bursary options.
 - **Imperial’s UROP Bursary scheme: opens** January; **closes mid-February:** <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/urop/how-to-get-involved/funding/sources-of-funding/>

