

Interview process

National Centre for Biological Sciences &
The Institute for Stem Cell Biology & Regenerative Medicine

Dear Students,

I write to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the community at NCBS and inStem. This handbook will familiarise you with the actual interview process, and would also be meaningful to students eventually joining the program. Due to the ongoing pandemic, we are having to take our interviews online this year. This does not mean they are any less enriching for you. Even though you are not physically here, by interacting with the students and faculty, you are able to get a feel for the campus, and understand what life and research here would be like.

Additional information on all laboratories and the programs on offer are available on the websites www.ncbs.res.in; www.instem.res.in.

With best wishes

Mukund Thattai
Head, Academics

Graduate studies at NCBS and InStem

PhD & Integrated-PhD programmes

NCBS offers a graduate programme leading to the award of a PhD degree to students who hold a Masters degree in a Basic Science or a Bachelors degree in an Applied Science such as Medicine, Engineering etc. The NCBS Integrated-PhD programme seeks students with an excellent academic record at the B.Sc. level, strongly motivated to pursue a career in research. A small number of students may be appointed to our M.Sc. by Research programme, and provided salary support on individual PI grants. Entry to this M.Sc. programme is via the wait list of the Integrated-PhD programme.

inStem offers a graduate programme leading to the award of a PhD degree to students who hold a Masters degree in a Basic Science or a Bachelors degree in Medicine.

Students register for a PhD typically 1.5 to 2 years after the date of joining, once they have met course requirements and passed a comprehensive examination. Students enrolled in the graduate programme at NCBS are registered at TIFR Mumbai, and enrolled at inStem are registered at Manipal University.

While most of the students in our graduate program have their primary degree in the Life Sciences, both NCBS and inStem welcome students with backgrounds outside of the Life Sciences. Students with a primary degree in Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science, or Engineering are encouraged to explore the exciting possibilities of doing research in cutting-edge problems in biology.

Academic Office

All queries should be addressed to phd@ncbs.res.in.

Matters related to the interviews are coordinated by the Academic Office. Ms. K. S. Vishalakshi is the primary contact for all correspondence related to selection and joining the programme.

All queries related to the interviews should be directed to phd@ncbs.res.in. Please do not call unless there is an emergency, and do not contact our faculty for information regarding the interviews.

In case of medical emergencies or clashes with exams or other interviews, suitably justified requests for rescheduling within the assigned durations of the Interviews may be submitted to phd@ncbs.res.in with the subject line Name_GS2020_date change.

Selection Process

Candidates are invited to apply in response to advertisements appearing in national newspapers in September every year. Candidates shortlisted on the basis of their performance in the Joint Graduate Entrance Exam in Biology and Interdisciplinary Life Sciences Exam (JGEEBILS) are invited to submit their biodata, research proposals, and letters of recommendation. These materials are used to shortlist candidates for interviews in Bangalore. Students who qualify in the TIFR Physics or Chemistry exams may also be invited to submit their applications to NCBS if they have indicated an interest in the Life Sciences. Interviews for the PhD and Integrated-PhD programmes are done in two rounds. Final offers are made on the basis of the performance in these interviews. We do not operate a cutoff based on the number of candidates, we only score on the merit of each candidate.

Note that the Department of Biological Sciences of TIFR Mumbai (DBS), as well as all the partner institutes participating in the JGEEBILS system, make offers independently. It is therefore possible that some candidates are offered admission at multiple locations. Candidates must accept the offer at only one centre.

Interviews

Please do not prepare for the interviews by memorising material! We are interested in your grasp of basics, your breadth of knowledge, and your ability to solve problems. Students with backgrounds outside of life sciences can mention this to their panel, we will ensure that an expert is available to interview candidates in their area of primary expertise.

Before the interview date, we will call you to test your phone connection. At this time, if you have the app, we will include you in a WhatsApp group to connect you with our current students. You can use that forum to ask any questions you have regarding the campus, the interviews, and life in Bangalore.

There is a short session on the morning of the first day to orient you to the selection process and what you can expect in the interview.

The first round is a 20 minute interview with a 3 member panel. Candidates will be questioned in their basic understanding of Biology, Chemistry or Physics as well as quantitative and reasoning skills. The committee will probe your understanding of concepts taught in high school and at the undergraduate level. Based on performance in the first round, students are shortlisted for the second round. The second round is a more in-depth interview with a different panel. This round will probe your depth of understanding and the ability to apply the knowledge of an area of special interest. Often the statement of purpose in the application package, or a candidate's research experience if they have had some, is used as a basis of questioning. The final list is based on performance in both rounds of the interview, which is announced at the conclusion of the interview process.

Overseas candidates

We invite applications from students enrolled outside the Indian Subcontinent for their undergraduate studies. The entrance test may be waived for overseas applicants who are unable to travel to India to take the JGEEBILS exam. However, students who would like to be considered for the graduate programme at NCBS/inStem are encouraged to write Head Academics or the Academic Office before November each year.

The Academic Office will assist you with the submission of an application package and the subsequent steps in the selection process. If selected to the programme students are expected to join on August 1st or at the earliest possible date thereafter.

There are specific requirements for travel and visa documents for foreign nationals which have to be completed prior to arrival at NCBS/inStem. The Academic Office coordinates with the establishment office at NCBS/inStem to assist students through this process.

Materials you should send before the interviews

You **MUST** be able to send us: Your call letter; proof of ID (university ID, PAN card, or government-issued ID) the day before the interview. You should take and send a photograph of these materials through WhatsApp or email. We may ask to connect with you by video call, briefly, to discuss your documentation.

Acceptance of the offer

A formal offer to join the programme will reach you within 15 days from the date of the interview. You are expected to inform us about your acceptance of the offer or otherwise by the date specified in the letter.

Accommodation for graduate students

NCBS and inStem offer accommodation to all students selected on the graduate programme. Students on the main lists of the PhD and Int-PhD have priority, followed by PhD students on grants and the MSc students. Rooms are allotted only after students arrive on campus and cannot be reserved. Rooms are allotted only after the submission of a joining report and completing administrative formalities in August.

Orientation and Rotations

New students join on August 1st. All new students must participate in the Orientation Programme. During the programme, sessions are arranged with faculty members who describe work ongoing in their laboratories. The programme also includes sessions with individuals who manage Research, Technical and Administrative Services on the campus. Students are guided through procedures such as the completion of the mandatory medical test and administrative formalities towards joining in the course of this program. Administrative staff will assist you in this. Additional information on rotations, courses etc. will be provided during the Orientation Programme. Laboratory allotments for graduate studies are ONLY made after the completion of laboratory rotations. No student in the graduate programme is exempt from laboratory rotations.