

European Summer School on Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine

XVIII

12-19th September 2025, Spetses, Greece

Application Guidance

We are looking forward to welcoming students to our 2025 course on Spetses Island in Greece. We hope that you find this guidance document helpful when you are preparing your applications.

ADVICE: Please read this guidance carefully before making your application. It answers all the questions we have been asked in previous years by candidates and it is designed to help you through the process.

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1. Application Process

There is a two-stage application process for our summer school.

- Stage One – Preliminary application for shortlisting
- Stage Two – Full application following an offer of a place by the organisers

There is a waiting list system for unsuccessful/late applications.

1.1 Stage One Application

**Stage one applications for the 2025 summers school will open on Monday 10th February 2025.
The closing date for applications will be Friday 30th May 2025 at 10pm UK BST.**

The online application form will be available from the following webpage:

<https://www.stemcellsummerschool.org/apply>

A maximum of 56 places will be allocated in 2025.

A PDF summary of the questions for stage one is attached to help you prepare your answers in advance. The application must be made via the online form (not emailed) and you will be required to upload a CV and also a statement from your Supervisor/Group Leader which explains why they think you are suitable to attend this course.

Applications are assessed by the organisers on the basis of eligibility criteria and scientific merit as follows:

- Preference is given to candidates who are:
 - in their second or third year of their PhD studies
 - post-doctoral researcher
 - clinician scientist
- First-year PhD students may apply but are not as suitable for the course because it requires a good understanding of the field and students get maximum benefit from the course when they are at least one year into their PhD research and can talk to faculty and get feedback on their research to-date.
- Undergraduate students will not be accepted.
- A letter of support from your supervisor must indicate why they think you are suitable for the course. Please make sure this isn't a one-sentence recommendation on an email. The letter must detail why you are a good candidate. The letter helps the organisers to choose the candidates based on scientific merit and relevance.
- Students must clearly demonstrate that they understand their topic. Please write your case for support carefully and focus on the research questions you are trying to answer.
- Applicants who have attended the course in a previous year may be considered but must provide a strong and compelling reason for attending the course a second time. Priority is given to students who have never had the opportunity to attend before.
- Applicants who were unsuccessful in previous years can re-apply and should indicate that they applied previously but were unsuccessful.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered by the organisers.
- Late stage one applications will not be considered by the organisers and will be placed on the waiting list. They will only be reviewed if a place becomes available because another candidate drops out.
- We welcome applications from candidates globally.
- We have an equal opportunity policy and welcome applications from all eligible candidates

CV – you will be required to upload a PDF copy of your CV.

Letter of support – you will be required to upload a PDF copy of the letter of support from your supervisor.

ADVICE: Problems submitting your application:

We hope you won't have any problems with our online application process, however, if you encounter a technical error please do let the Jenny (the course organiser) know via admin@stemcellsummerschool.org and she will be happy to fix the technical issue so you can complete your application online.

Please do not contact Jenny and ask her if you can email your documentation instead of submitting it online. We get hundreds of applications and we cannot accept manual applications.

The first stage application is a very competitive process. The organisers receive a large number of applications each year so **please take the time to write your application carefully and check for errors before you submit it.**

1.2 Stage Two Application

Once the organisers have reviewed all applications, they shortlist the candidates to be offered places at the course.

Applicants will be notified whether they have been successful and have been allocated a place by 20th June 2025. Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified by this date.

To accept your place you will have one week to pay for your place and complete the second stage application form with detailed information about your travel arrangements and poster abstracts etc.

Please note the following carefully:

- All payments must be received by Friday 4th July 2025.
- If you have not completed your second stage application and made payment by the 4th July 2025 you are deemed to have declined the place and we will offer that place to another candidate. We will not be offering any time extensions.
- Any places not accepted by Friday 4th July 2025 will be released to other candidates on the waiting list.
- Payments can only be made by credit/debit card through the online system.
- No invoices will be raised and it is not possible to pay by cheque or bank transfer.
- Cancellation is only possible by 18th July 2025. After this time no refunds will be offered.

When you confirm your place you will be asked to upload the following information:

- Final poster details. Please ensure you have prepared this in advance. You will not be able to supply your poster details at a later date (or change them).
- A copy of your travel insurance certificate. PLEASE READ THE GUIDANCE BELOW CAREFULLY REGARDING TRAVEL INSURANCE.
- Details of the flights you have booked. PLEASE READ THE GUIDANCE BELOW REGARDING BOOKING YOUR TRAVEL.

We will not give stage two application extensions because you do not have the documentation ready. If you cannot supply the documentation by the 16th June then your place will be allocated to someone on the waiting list.

1.3 Fees and Bursaries

(i) Fees

The delegate registration fee for the course in 2025 will be €1300. The fee includes B&B accommodation, all lectures and course materials and some meals as listed in the programme. Lunches are not provided (except on day 2) and Dinners are not provided (except the opening and closing dinners). Students make their own arrangements for any meals/refreshments not specified in the programme.

(ii) Bursaries

The organisers are in the process of sourcing bursary funding and will announce any available bursaries as soon as possible. If you wish to be considered for bursary funding (if any becomes available) please complete the relevant information in the bursary section of the application. Please note that bursaries will be allocated to individuals who can demonstrate the greatest financial need.

Some applicants will be from networks who may provide bursaries to a small number of their students. Applicants still have to apply for the course and be shortlisted by the organisers (there are no automatic places). If you are allocated a place then your network will choose the individuals who will receive the bursaries from your network and the organisers will then inform you that you have been successful.

Students who do not have funding to cover their registration fees (and are therefore being considered for bursaries) will be notified by the organisers whether they have been successful in being awarded a bursary when they are invited to place their stage 2 application. Applicants who have not been successful in being awarded a bursary will also be notified and can be placed on a waiting list in case any bursaries are declined. This does happen periodically because students have found funding between submitting their stage 1 application and the stage 2 invitations being made and therefore no longer need bursaries.

Travel Grants

There are numerous sources of travel funding for PhD students and early career researchers available throughout Europe. Please speak to your group leader for advice on which you might be able to apply to for travel funding.

1.4 Waiting List

Once the main application deadline has closed a waiting list will open. Candidates who were not successful in the original round will be placed on this waiting list as well as anyone who applies late. There is no guarantee that waiting list applicants will be given a place on the course (indeed, in previous years only one or two waiting list places became available).

In the event that places become available on the course waiting list applicants will be considered against the same criteria as stage one. Waiting list preference will be given to applicants who applied on time but were not successful in the first round. Applicants who applied late will be placed at the bottom of the list.

In the event that a waiting list applicant is successful they will be asked to pay the registration fee and upload additional details such as poster abstracts etc. The applicant will have one week to do so to confirm their place.

The latest date that waiting list applicants will be notified is Friday 25th July 2025. If you have not been successful in getting a place by this date please apply for next year's course.

SCER is a not-for-profit organisation supporting stem cell scientists and their research, and providing educational information for the public.

2. Travel for Stage 2 Applicants

Candidates who are successful in being invited to submit stage 2 applications will need to provide details of their travel arrangements to confirm their place. Please read the following guidance carefully **before** booking your flights and ferries. The following information is also available on our website:

<https://www.stemcellsummerschool.org/travel-information>

2.1 Travel insurance

Travel insurance is a requirement for all participants who attend the course. All students are required to provide copies of their insurance certificate at stage two before being accepted on the course. **Travel insurance IS NOT THE SAME AS MEDICAL INSURANCE.** Stem Cell Education and Research (SCER) does not accept any liability for any travel/medical costs incurred by any individual participating in the summer school. **Please read the following carefully:**

What does travel insurance cover?

Travel insurance covers things like your travel costs in case you have to cancel, loss of baggage, refund of your delegate fee if you are unable to attend for any reason (ie if you cannot attend and your Institution wants to reclaim the costs of your delegate fee), insurance if you need emergency treatment whilst you are on the course (eg being flown off the island for emergency care).

Documents you can provide to prove you have travel insurance:

Please ensure that whichever document you supply has been **translated into English** when you upload it to the application form.

Option (i) Travel insurance certificate from your employer/institution

Most institutions can provide a travel insurance certificate which specifies cover for an individual as a part of their work/employment for that Institution. Please ask them for a copy of your insurance certificate and make sure the document shows clearly what is covered under the travel insurance (eg lost baggage, delayed or cancelled flights, course fee refunds if you cancel your place, medical insurance etc)

Option (ii) Letter from your Institution confirming travel insurance

If you cannot provide a formal certificate of travel insurance in option (i), please arrange for the following letter to be put on your Institution's headed paper and signed by an Institution representative. SCER will accept this as proof of that the individual is fully insured for all travel/health related costs including if you have to cancel attendance for any reason and that SCER is not liable for any costs.

Institution Letter Template:

"To Stem Cell Education and Research,

It is hereby confirmed that <<insert name of delegate>> is fully covered by <<insert Institute name>>'s insurance through <<insert insurer name>> in connection with their attendance at the European Summer School on Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine in <<insert year>>. The insurance covers travel, health etc. Conditions for the insurance can be found at: <<insert weblink>>. Our insurance covers cancellation of attendance, flights and other costs associated with the <<insert name of delegate>>'s attendance at the European Summer School on Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Education and Research is not liable for any costs associated with this delegate's attendance.

Signature of authorised individual."

Option (iii) Obtaining personal travel insurance.

SCER is a not-for-profit organisation supporting stem cell scientists and their research, and providing educational information for the public.

In previous years delegates who have not been able to obtain travel insurance through their institution have either used their own personal travel insurance or purchased their own personal travel insurance through <https://www.globelink.co.uk> which provides travel insurance for European citizens. There are many other providers who also provide travel insurance if you google for them.

Medical cover

Whilst medical cover is obviously important, a European health card does not provide travel insurance, it only provides standard medical cover (which is unlikely to include things like emergency medical flights from Spetses island to the mainland).

Liability

You need to ensure you have travel insurance to cover any emergency costs you may incur. **SCER accepts no liability for delegates' medical or other costs whilst attending the course.**

IMPORTANT:

When you upload your travel insurance the certificate will need to state it is travel insurance and that it covers things like flight cancellation, loss of baggage, medical insurance.

If you upload a medical certificate instead of a travel insurance document your application will be rejected and your place will be offered to someone on the waiting list.

YOU WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED ON THE COURSE WITHOUT PROOF OF TRAVEL INSURANCE.

2.2 Booking your Travel

In order to reach Spetses you have to take a ferry from Piraeus Port which is on the outskirts of Athens. Ferries regularly get cancelled due to the high summer winds. The bigger sea-cats are less likely to get cancelled than the dolphins/aerospeeds. Ferries cost approximately €80 return.

To ensure that you arrive on Spetses island in time for the start of the course, we suggest you do one of the following travel options:

Option 1: Arrive in Athens the night before the course starts and stay in a cheap hotel in Athens/Piraeus so that you can take the morning/lunchtime ferry to Spetses island. The course does not cover this additional night of accommodation but many students have done this in the past. Accommodation on Spetses island is expensive so most students don't choose to travel to Spetses island the night before the course starts because of the high cost of accommodation.

Option 2: Arrive in Athens very early morning on the day the course is due to start and get the ferry directly from Piraeus to Spetses.

Ferry information:

The sea cats are better than the dolphins because they are bigger and more stable in the wind and therefore less likely to be cancelled in the Greek summer winds. It takes approximately 3 hours from Piraeus to Spetses depending on which ferry you take. The winds are lower in the early morning or early evenings.

Ferry timetables and bookings can be made through the following websites:

<https://www.bluestarferries.com/en-gb>

<https://alphalines.gr/en/>

<https://www.ferryhopper.com/>

Examples of timings for reaching Spetses by ferry

09:30 ferry arriving Spetses at 12:05

- flight would need to arrive in Athens by 06:00am latest to make that boat

10:00 ferry arriving Spetses at 13:00

- flight would need to arrive in Athens by 07:00am latest to make that boat

13:30 arriving Spetses at 15:50

- flight would need to arrive in Athens by 10:30am latest to make that boat

15:15 arriving Spetses at 17:20

- flight would need to arrive in Athens by 12:00pm latest to make that boat

15:45 arriving Spetses at 18:40

- flight would need to arrive in Athens by 12:00pm latest to make that boat & **you will miss registration & the opening session. Students should not take this boat unless they miss their earlier connections.**

18:30 arriving Spetses at 21:40

- flight would need to arrive in Athens by 15:00pm latest to avoid traffic and make that boat and **you will miss the first evening. Students should not take this boat unless they miss their earlier connections.**

Travel from Athens airport to Piraeus port

It takes approximately 1 hour to clear customs at Athens airport (sometimes slower so allow 1.5 hours to clear customs).

Option 1: Metro – We recommend travelling to the port of Piraeus by Metro as it is quick and cheap. If you are travelling from Athens airport to Piraeus by metro you need to leave at least 1.5 hours to travel between the two locations. It costs approximately €10 to travel from the airport to Piraeus (one way) using Metro Line 3.

<https://www.oasa.gr/en/visit-athens/metro-line-3-to-airport/>. It is a five minute walk (500m) from the Piraeus Metro station to the Port. The first metro from the airport to Piraeus in the morning is at 06:10. Tickets can be purchased at the metro station.

Option 2: Taxi - Depending on the time of day it takes approximately 1 hour from Athens airport to Piraeus by taxi. Traffic in Athens can be terrible though, particularly at rush hour. We have used the following company in the past <https://www.welcomepickups.com> If you can share a taxi with other students this will reduce the cost. It costs approximately €100 from the airport to Piraeus (one way).

Travel from Athens airport to Spetses on land

This is a more expensive option but if the ferries aren't running it is an alternative option to avoid missing the start of the course. It is possible to get a land taxi from Athens airport to the port of Kosta for approximately €350 if booked in advance (a standard car holds 3 people). You then take a sea-taxi from Kosta directly to the Spetses Hotel for approximately €40 (you will need cash because most taxis don't have a card machine). You will have to pay the same for the return trip.

3. Venue and Accommodation

Lots of information about the venue can be found on the website at:

<https://www.stemcellsummerschool.org/venue-accommodation> Please read the website for lots more information. The information below is relevant to the stage 2 application

3.1 Accommodation

All students are allocated a twin room at the Spetses Hotel. When students are offered a place on the course they are asked who they would like to share with. If no preference is stated then shared rooms are allocated on a same-gender basis.

ADVICE: If you have specific requirements for your accommodation eg medical issues please note these in your stage 2 application answers at the relevant section. Common requests are to share with a friend or colleague.

Applicants will be notified who they are sharing with approximately one week prior to the course.

4. Useful information for stage 2 applicants

Lots of useful information including a packing list etc can be found on our website: <https://www.stemcellsummerschool.org/information-for-delegates> . The following is particularly important to note.

(i) Poster format

All Summer School students present a poster. **The poster should be created in A0 portrait format.** Please do not bring landscape posters. The posters will be mounted with pins. Students will be responsible for mounting their own posters at the correct time. Information about this will be provided in the delegate pack. It is a requirement that students present a poster.

Please note, any student who arrives without a poster will be required to create one on-site using a flip-chart and marker pens.

(ii) Delegate pack

A delegate pack will be sent to all delegates electronically one week before the school starts. The Organisers will not be providing a printed copy of the delegate pack.

If you wish you wish to have a printed copy of the delegate pack please print it yourself and bring it with you. The course no longer provides printed copies to reduce print and shipping costs (which helps keep the delegate fee lower) and also to reduce paper wastage.