

## EMBL Training Review Report Summary and Response

The review of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory's Training programme took place at EMBL-EBI in Hinxton and virtually on 17th to 19th March 2026. The review panel consisted of 15 international experts, including three members of EMBL's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). The chair was Mónica Bettencourt-Dias, Gulbenkian Institute for Molecular Medicine (GIMM), Oeiras (Portugal) and Director Elect at Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG), Barcelona (Spain). Lori Passmore, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB), Cambridge (UK), acted as Sub-Chair. Several observers were present, including Savvas Savvides, Vice Chair of EMBL Council, Ewan Birney, Interim Director General, Jo McEntyre, Interim Director of EMBL-EBI, and Jessica Vamathevan, Chief Strategy Officer. The review took place in a hybrid format.

### Evaluation Summary

Training is one of the five missions that EMBL pursues. The international panel of reviewers praised EMBL International Centre for Advanced Training (EICAT)'s pivotal role and unique and future-looking approach to training, standing out among other life science research institutions. They specially highlighted how EMBL has anticipated major upcoming transformations, such as AI, and more importantly, has adapted its portfolio accordingly thereby leading globally in scientific training and preparing scientists for the future. The panel reviewed four teams and their performance: Internal Training, External Training, EMBL-EBI Training, and Science Education and Public Engagement (SEPE). The panel also acknowledged the recent and upcoming internal and external changes affecting EICAT.

The reviewers recognised EICAT's performance as of remarkable quality and reach across the four teams and they also praised their culture of innovation and co-creation. They also positively welcomed the pathways-to-impact framework developed by the team, which they expect to be instrumental for prioritisation and decision making during the next review period.

The panel recognised Monika Lachner's impressive impact and excellent management skills despite her increase in responsibilities and the financial constraints, among other challenges, during this review period. Given the scope expansion of her role, the panel encouraged EMBL to re-evaluate her former roles as Dean and Head of Internal Training, taking into consideration workloads and governance. In addition, the panel also recommended giving strategic consideration to which posts would benefit from open-ended contracts for continuity and stability of the teams. Furthermore, in order to streamline integration with a coordinated strategy and coherent delivery as well as facilitate resource sharing, the panel also recommended

reassessing the integration of EMBL-EBI Training into EICAT, specially in light of the imminent retirement of Cath Brooksbank.

The panel highlighted how AI has been embraced and successfully embedded within EICAT and its portfolio as a joint effort between Internal and External training, EMBL-EBI training and the Data Science Centre. The AlphaFold practical guide, the “AI and Biology” conference and the BiotrAI project are examples of this fruitful collaboration. Regarding EICAT’s future plans in this area, despite being considered ambitious, the panel strongly supported the new upcoming planned developments and recommended a clear and transparent framework for managing commercial AI partnerships. The panel believes that EMBL is well positioned in this area and should become a leader in AI training for life sciences.

The reviewers also praised the excellent implementation of the new training programme for incoming and mid-term Group and Team Leaders (GTLs), in collaboration with HR and EMBO solutions, following the recommendations from the last review. The panel supports its consolidation and recommends considering further professional and career development support, especially for senior GTLs. Furthermore, in order to support more complete and responsible scientific careers, reviewers also recommended tracking and recognising community service contributions of GTLs, including training and public engagement activities.

The panel also highlighted the new SEPE’s programme, which included the public engagement activities during the TREC expedition, the opening of the World of Molecular Biology exhibition and the on-demand teacher training. In order to ensure equal prominence and fair value placed on SEPE's work, the reviewers recommended re-assessing the outward-facing identity of EICAT, including its name.

The panel encouraged EMBL to come to a firm decision regarding whether to pursue accreditation and become a degree granting institution while continuing to engage with local universities thereby facilitating and harmonising interactions.

Reviewers also praised the success of hybrid formats in bringing all EMBL sites together and, based on that, recommended re-evaluating and potentially rebalancing hybrid and in-person delivery with trainers rotating location or adopting more widely the two-hub model. Further balancing and prioritisation is also required for a successful delivery of different course formats, including on-demand training to ensure efficient delivery, given that resources and capacity are not unlimited.

The panel recognised EDI challenges in training reach and encouraged the Training teams to expand their efforts to address under-served communities, especially in the Global South, where demand is high but local capacity is often limited.

Overall, the review panel found that EMBL Training is a reference not only in Europe but also at global level, which is especially remarkable in the context of the current AI revolution, to which

EMBL Training teams have responded and adapted rapidly and strategically, laying the foundation for its continued success during the upcoming period.

## Response to the Panel's Recommendations

I would like to thank all review panel members, and particularly the Chair, Mónica Bettencourt-Dias, and the Sub-Chair Lori Passmore, for their time, effort, and valuable feedback on EMBL Training. The discussions with the panel during the review were very constructive and their input will be very useful to continue shaping the scope and organisation of EMBL Training moving forward.

I would like to extend my congratulations to everybody within EMBL Training for this outstanding review and especially Monika Lachner for her impactful leadership during a period of change and transition. I also join the panel in commending all EMBL Training staff for their very successful integration of AI across the training portfolio and supporting valuable commercial AI partnerships, a strategic decision highly aligned with both the future plans of EMBL and with the needs of the life sciences community.

I am also grateful for the positive evaluation of the recently developed and implemented GTL training programme. I also appreciate the suggestions of the panel to track and recognise GTL's contributions to internal and external communities (including committee participation, training and public engagement activities) in order to recognise, foster and support more complete and responsible scientific careers, which EMBL is already committed to through the signature of DORA and participation in CoARA.

I would also like to join the panel in praising the fantastic work that SEPE has done over the past four years, in strong alignment with the organisation's as well as EICAT's priorities and directions. EMBL recognises the importance and impact of public engagement with large audiences and diverse communities.

I would also like to thank the panel for their recommendations to effectively prioritise the different external training offerings in order to balance in-person courses with hybrid and on-demand formats. I am also grateful for the suggestions to adopt innovative formats such as the two-hub model to ensure further integration of the smaller EMBL sites into the institutional training portfolio. We will also take into consideration the panel's suggestions to continue towards a One-EMBL training portfolio. At the same time we may identify potential efficiencies to enable the delivery of highly oversubscribed courses and conferences.

Lastly, I am grateful for the panel's encouragement to further engage with communities with high demand but low capacity. EMBL is committed to continue making training materials, frameworks and evaluation tools openly available and actively promoted to facilitate their access and usage by other institutions around the globe.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate all the EMBL Training teams once again for this very successful review, their exceptional work and capacity to adapt to changes and new technologies such as AI. This review has highlighted the remarkable work done by the EMBL Training teams, as well as the many opportunities ahead, through rich discussions. My thanks to Mónica Bettencourt-Dias and all of the members of the review panel for all the constructive discussions and their valuable input, which will be critical for the future of EMBL Training.



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