



PhD Student

Nils Gehlenborg

As a PhD student, I primarily work on my research projects, which includes software development and data analysis, as well as reading and writing of papers. I also travel occasionally to visit collaborators, attend conferences and workshops where I present my work and network with others in my field.

Length of time in the post

Three years (PhD studies usually last for between three and a half to four years).

Education and other qualifications

'Diplom' (comparable to an MSc) in Bioinformatics from the University of Tübingen in Germany. During my studies I spent a year as an exchange student in the United States at the University of Washington in Seattle.

An overview of your career path before joining the EBI

During my studies in Tübingen I became involved in several bioinformatics research projects as a student assistant and, after my year at the University of Washington, had the opportunity to do an internship at the Institute for Systems Biology in Seattle. I later returned to the Institute for Systems Biology for my Masters thesis.

What attracted you to this role?

Given the expertise and resources of the EBI, it is without doubt one of the best places in the world to do large-scale, integrative bioinformatics. As this is what I wanted to do in my PhD, the decision to come here was an easy one. Other important factors in my decision were the proximity of the EBI to the University of Cambridge and that the EBI has a partnership with the University which means my degree will reflect my affiliation to both institutions. The international character of the EBI and the interdisciplinary nature of an EMBL PhD were also attractions for me.

Describe a 'typical' working day

I typically spend most of my day working directly on one of my projects, which means that I'm either developing software, researching the literature or writing papers. In between these activities, I'm often having discussions with my collaborators and meetings with my advisor, other people at the EBI or at the University of Cambridge. I also use some of my time to organise seminars and workshops on topics that are relevant to my research.

What is the best thing about your job?

Freedom; being able to define the topic of my research and to set priorities according to my own interests is what I value most about my position.

Why do you enjoy working at the EBI?

One of the main reasons that I enjoy my work is because there are so many opportunities to attend talks, workshops and conferences where I can meet like-minded people and renowned researchers in my field.

Describe the most challenging tasks that you face in your job?

The biggest challenge for me is that there are so many exciting projects going on here at the EBI it can be difficult not to become side-tracked from the focus of my research project!

What advice would you give to someone applying to a similar role?

The opportunities here are almost endless, so having a good idea of what you want to do and achieve in your PhD is helpful. ●

