ESO Studentships: PhD Opportunities in Garching and Santiago

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ESO offers a number of opportunities for graduate students to spend part of their research studies in the observatory environment. The primary aim is to give young researcher the opportunity to discover ESO during their PhD studies and participate in an exciting research environment. Further, this represents one of many opportunities for students to be immersed in an international environment and to work at one of the centres of European and worldwide astronomy. Last but not least, it allows researchers/supervisors of ESO’s community to foster stronger links with their ESO colleagues.

Historical Background
In the early days there was no formal studentship programme, and there were few students at ESO. One avenue was provided by the French, later the Belgians, who allowed some of their students to do the ‘cooperant’ service with ESO in Chile. Some of these students later became ESO staff astronomers and have served the organisation for many years.

The formal studentship programme was introduced to ESO under the directorship of Harry van der Laan (see The Messenger 55, 12, 1989). He launched, to supplement the already existing fellowship programme, a studentship programme with eight studentships split between Garching and Santiago, later 16 students at ESO at anytime.

Many students who spent some time of their formative years at ESO have come back to take up a staff position or supported ESO in the community. Reading through the list of former students at ESO one encounters many of the leading astronomers in Europe today. We consider this programme to be very effective in binding ESO into its community. Together with the fellowship programme the studentships are a major link of community astronomers with their colleagues at ESO. Into the VLT era, the studentships offer rather unique opportunities, such as gaining hands-on experience with modern instrumentation, reduction and analysis techniques, or interferometry. In this respect, ESO provides distinctive complements to the education of young astronomers that may not be offered at every university. Of course, spending a couple of years of study in a country like Chile holds appeals for some as well. A comprehensive report on studentships in Vitacura is given in Danielle Alloin’s recent article (The Messenger 117, 61, 2004).

Students’ gender
Distributions of genders of ESO students, averaged since 1992. The 1/3–2/3 female/male distribution corresponds closely to the distribution of applications from both genders. The distribution is similar for Santiago and Garching.

Students’ duty station
Distribution of students per duty station since 1992 – While the distribution was close to 50/50 until the end of the ’90s, the IMPRS has tipped the balanced in favour of Garching in recent years.
THE ‘REGULAR’ ESO STUDENTSHIPS: A VISIT DURING YOUR PHD STUDIES

The regular ESO studentships comprise the core of the studentship programme. These provide PhD students with funding for 12 to 24 months to pursue their research at ESO. The studentships can be taken up either at the ESO headquarters in Garching, Germany, or at the ESO science office in Santiago, Chile.

In order to be eligible for this programme, students must be enrolled in a PhD programme at their home university. Ideally, they would come after their first year to visit ESO for 1–2 years, before returning to their home institutions to finish their PhD. This implies that the student’s supervisor gets into contact with an ESO scientist who could act as local supervisor during the student’s stay. The home supervisors are usually encouraged to profit from ESO’s visitor programme, and can spend extended periods of time at ESO themselves.

We have about 10 such studentships available at a given time at each site. We can typically offer five new positions per year both at any given time at each site. We can typically offer five new positions per year both at any given time at each site. We can typically offer five new positions per year both at any given time at each site.
HE EUROPEAN SOCIETIES ARE undergoing fast changes these years. The need to manage the European integration process as well as to develop adequate solutions in the face of globalization and the pressure on the ‘European way of life’ led the Heads of states and governments of the EU to set for themselves the goal of developing the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world within a 10-year period. Both the goals and the policies to reach them are known as the Lisbon Agenda and the Lisbon Process, respectively, reminding us that it was in the city of Lisbon – in the year 2000 – that this development was started. Now, at half-time, the process has been reviewed and the governments have acknowledged the need to focus on the most essential policy areas that must be developed to achieve success. Central to the revised Lisbon agenda is the notion of ‘knowledge’ – ‘creation’ of knowledge through science, its dissemination through education and its exploitation by society through technological development.

As part of its contribution to the ongoing debate about Lisbon, the seven EIROforum partner organizations have presented a joint science policy paper laying out their ideas and proposals in order to further the Lisbon Process. With the title ‘Towards a Europe of Knowledge and Innovation’, the paper analyses the challenges to science raised by the Lisbon Agenda and the contribution that science can make in this context. It suggests directions that political actions should take to strengthen science and thus enable it to support the attainment of the goals set at the Lisbon Summit. These suggestions include proposals for concrete actions involving the EIROforum organizations, both in terms of activities that reach out to society at large (e.g. in education, public awareness of science, etc.) and actions that aim to improve the conditions for researchers and thus to achieve EIROforum’s overall vision of creating a climate in Europe in which relevant, competitive scientific research (basic and applied) can be undertaken in an efficient, cost effective and successful way’. The document discusses the need for fundamental research.