The Cambridge High Impact Research Project

Mentee handbook

Acknowledgements:

How to use the handbook

This is a resource you can refer back to if you are ever unsure about your Project. This handbook should cover everything you might need to know about the project over the next 8 weeks. I would recommend reading through the initial sections which provide an overview of the programme and what is expected of mentees.

Points of contact

If ever there is something you are still unsure about you can contact your team's **research manager.** Additionally you can reach out to:

Jian Xin (CHIRP Lead and Safeguarding): **jianxin@eacambridge.org,+ 44 7539 109278**
Mike Wilson (Student Lead): **Mw943@cam.ac.uk, +44 7907 640578**

Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronyms	Translations
CHIRP	Cambridge High Impact Research Project
ITN	Importance, Tractability, and Neglectedness
RM	Research manager
GHD	Global Health and Development
AW	Animal welfare
Biosec	Biosecurity
Ex-risk	Existential Risk
EA	Effective Altruism
W/c	Week Commencing

What is the Cambridge High Impact Project?

Overview

The Cambridge High Impact Project (CHIRP) is an 8 week mentored research program, focusing on 4 main **cause areas** we believe are Important, Neglected and Tractable.

These span across
- Biosecurity
- Global health and development
- Animal welfare
- Existential risk

Over these 8 weeks you will be working with a word class mentor in these areas, with the aim to produce a **3000 word report** on a research area agreed upon by you, your team and your mentor. You will have been assigned to teams of 2-3, and by the end of the kickoff weekend will have decided on your team lead.

What is the aim of this program?

The aim of this program is **not to produce groundbreaking research**, it's to **produce groundbreaking researchers**.

> The main value of these 8 weeks is in giving you the **skills, confidence and connections** to use your research acumen to effect positive change in the world. We view the research project itself as being instrumental to that end, as in the process you will gain exposure to the tool necessary to produce great impactful research.

Some of the things we hope you gain from the program.

Through direct research as well the weekly mentorship
- Exposure to domain specific knowledge in your cause area.
- Exposure to the tools and techniques involved in impactful research
- Exposure to some of the opportunities available to those who wish to continue working in high impact research
- Guidance on how to progress into a career which focuses on high impact research

Through your team
- A network of likeminded peers who share your values
- Knowledge of how to delegate research responsibilities across a team
- Knowledge of how to communicate and organise a research project
- A potential future collaborator

In general
- The confidence and motivation to continue in high impact research, or a high impact career.
- A drive to think deeply about how to have an impact on the world
- A community of ambitious students who want to do as much as they can to make the world as good as it can be.
- A clear next step about how to make your career as impactful as possible.

The Timeline

KEY: *means that an event is not compulsory but highly recommended. <mark>highlighted</mark> means it's a firm deadline.*

Phase	Dates	What Happens	Details
Kickoff Weekend *Week 0*	24th January - 25th January	<mark>24th of January: Kickoff</mark> **25th of January**: First Co-working session*	**Kickoff**: Meet team, mentors & research managers. Start projects. Free dinner. *Critical to attend—hard to catch up on missed content.* **First Co-working session:** co-working sessions will be held in the meridian office and will be run by your RM. There will also be non compulsory talks every session.
Research Bulk *Week 1-5*	26th January - 2nd March	**Weeks 1-4**: Core research period **Week 4+**: Start Writing first draft **W/c 2nd of February:** Review for continuation.	**Core research**: Most research happens here. Plan research, conduct analysis, start writing. **Start on draft:** Aim to begin writing up draft from about halfway through the program **Review for continuation:** Around two weeks into the programme, we will begin the review for continuation, Checking in with the mentors and mentees to check whether the project is worth continuing.
Draft Review *Week 6-7*	2nd March - 15th March	<mark>W/c 2nd of March: Submit your first draft</mark> **Weekends**: Co- working and presentation workshop*	**Draft Submission**: 1,500 - 2000 word draft reflecting final structure. Useful for presentation prep. Find out more in the output section of the handbook. This does not be half the final draft, and should reflect the key sections you expect may be in teh final draft. **Co-Working**: co working continues as normal, but we will additionally be running a workshop on how to better present research.
End of CHIRP and Presentations *Week 8*	16th March - 22nd March	<mark>W/c 16th of March: Present your project</mark> **20th of March**: End of term social*	**Presentations**: Last in-person event. Receive feedback. Presentations graded with final submission. The best presentation wins a cash prize. Will be an open event which we will publicise to members of the university. **End of term social:** Chance to celebrate the end of CHIRP before the final submission of projects.
Final Submission	Tuesday the 24th March	<mark>Final report Submission</mark>	**Final deadline for completed research**

Phase	Dates	What Happens	Details
Celebration Event	1st week Easter term*	**W/c 27th of April:** Celebration Dinner award Ceremony.	**Celebration Dinner award Ceremony:** Award ceremony for CHIRP winner, as well as prizes given out across several categories, followed by a free dinner as a last hurrah for everyone's hard work.

What do we expect from mentees?

Time commitments

Overall, we expect mentees to commit **5-7 hours** per week to their project, this is split across several areas. We understand that terms can be demanding, and so we have tried our best to set realistic expectations which respect your time. That said, we really believe that the more time and energy you dedicate to your project, the more you'll get out of it.

Below are some rough estimates about how your time might be spent. Additionally, we have 3 events throughout the programme which will set you up so your projects go as well as they can.

One off commitments

Kick off weekend: 24th of January (~5 hours)

This weekend is your best chance to meet your team, mentors and research managers. During the 5 hours we will cover the essentials of impactful research through quick talks, followed by an opportunity to get started on your projects. Teams are significantly more resilient if they have strong social bonds and a high degree of trust, which is why we have ensured you will have lots of opportunities to get to know your teammates. It is crucial that you attend this event as it is unlikely you will be able to catch up on missed content over the duration of the programme. Additionally there will be a free dinner provided in the evening.

First co working events: Every weekend from the 25th of January onwards (No additional time commitment)

Every weekend (saturday and sunday 1pm-6pm). The first of these we strongly recommend you come to, after this you and your team can decide your work schedule. Additionally, we will be running optional 10 minute talks focussed on research skills alongside co working.

We will be running co-working inside the Meridian office. The Meridian office is a fantastic work space in the centre of town shared by others working at the top of their field in the cause areas we focus on

Presentation event: w/c 16th of March (3 hours)

This event will take place just before term ends, and will be the last in person element of the programme before final submissions. These presentations offer teams a chance to receive feedback on their project. Presentations will be graded alongside your final submission and will partly inform which team wins. In addition, The team with the best presentation will receive a cash prize.

Celebration event: first week of easter (2 ½ hours)

This event is where we celebrate your hard work, as well as offer some guidance on next steps. It is also where we will announce the winning project, as well as the winners in several other categories. This will be followed by a free dinner which will mark the end of our first CHIRP.

Weekly commitments

Research/writing (3 hours)

The projects are research based and so we expect you will spend about half your time researching and getting to grips with novel research techniques. From week 4 onwards mentees should begin writing up their first draft in preparation for week 6.

Planning (1 hour)

Research, especially highly impactful research, requires a lot of great planning in order to stay on target. We expect for your project to go well you will have to dedicate about 1 hour per week to planning. Planning is not just an individual responsibility, it requires that your team meet regularly enough to set priorities.

Mentor meeting (1 hour)

One of the main advantages of these projects is the mentorship. This comes in the form of a 1 hour meeting with your mentor once a week (either online or in person). Attending the weekly mentor meetings is compulsory. The mentors have volunteered a lot of their own free time to these projects, so we expect mentees to respect their time. If for whatever reason you cannot attend a meeting please do let your mentor know as well as your research manager.

Check ins (½ hour)

Once every two weeks you will meet with your research manager. This is either in the form of a team meeting or a 1-1. This should average out at about 30 minutes per week. Their job is to support your team in a variety of ways (help organise meetings with mentors, help you deal with any research bottlenecks etc). Your research manager is also here to help with any wellbeing concerns you may have. For example, if you are struggling to work with your peers or mentor, they should be your first port of call.

Review for continuation

From the week beginning the 2nd of February, we will begin reviewing each project for its viability. This will involve the research manager consulting each mentee as well as the mentors, as well as checking on the general progress of the projects. We suspect it is highly unlikely that any project will have to be cut short early. We assume if projects do end, it won't be because of the quality of the work, but instead personal circumstances preventing either the mentor or mentee from continuing. None of the other sister programmes run in Oxford and London (IRG and RIO) have ever suspended a project early; We'd be surprised if things are different in the case of CHIRP.

Team lead

You're the operational hub of your team and handle day-to-day coordination and logistics so your mentor can focus on research guidance and your research manager can focus on supporting everyone. You're not the boss. You're first among equals, doing the same research work as everyone else, just with some extra coordination responsibilities.

We expect teams to spend an extra 1-2 hours per week beyond their normal research work. Mostly coordination, scheduling, and keeping track of things.

What you get to do

Schedule meetings

- Weekly team meetings (internal)
- Meetings with your mentor

Be the main communication point

- Message mentor to schedule things
- Update research manager between check-ins
- Make sure everyone up to date

Day-to-day accountability

- Track what everyone (including yourself) committed to doing each week
- Check if people are stuck and need help

First responder for team dynamics

- Notice if someone seems checked out or frustrated
- Try to solve issues peer-to-peer first
- If that doesn't work, escalate to your research manager

Coordinate task division

- Keep track of who's doing what
- Help figure out "you do X, I do Y, they do Z"

Make sure deliverables get submitted

- Track program deadlines (midpoint presentation, final project)
- Make sure team actually submits things on time (via submission forms)

Coordinate prep for mentor meetings

- Facilitate reviewing drafts before sending to mentor (everyone reviews, you coordinate it)
- Help team get organized so they can make the most of mentor's time

What this is NOT

- **Not judging if research is good**: That's your mentor's job, they have the expertise
- **Not managing the mentor-RM relationship**: That's your research manager's job.
- **Not solving serious team dysfunction alone**: You try peer-to-peer first, then escalate to research manager
- **Not enforcing program requirements**: Your research manager does that
- **Not being responsible for other people's work**: Everyone's responsible for their own output

Can you step down if needed?

Yes, but you need to give plenty of notice so the team can redistribute responsibilities or find someone else to take over. Better to flag early if it's not working than to let things fall apart. Let your team, RM and mentor know you're considering this.

Output and deadlines

Throughout the 8 weeks you will be expected to submit 3 pieces of work. These include:

The Draft: W/c 2nd of March

This is your best opportunity to get feedback from your mentors about your progress. We recommend following the rubric for the final submission as a guide to writing up your draft.
- This draft is between 1,500 and 2,000 words
- It should reflect the broad direction of your research, your core thesis.
- It does not have to be a polished piece of work but it should be written in full prose.
- Referencing at this stage is also expected.
- Bibliography is optional.
- Requirements may vary depending on the mentors' preferences.

The Presentation: W/c 16th of March (Exact Week confirmed by Week 6)

The presentation informs the eventual winner of the £1000 cash prize.
- The presentation is between 5-10 minutes long.
- It must involve more than one member of your team.
- It must come with a PowerPoint which covers the content of your report
- There should be time left at the end for questions.
- **The presentation will be open to members of the university. We'll publicise it to relevant departments in order to help you gain experience presenting your research in a more professional context.**

The Final Report Submission: Tuesday the 24th of March.

This is the ostensible output of the programme, and will form the main basis of decisions around who wins the prize money.
- 3,000-word report, comprising the large part of your research output.
- Aims to answer the central question of your project.
- Should we complete in references and include a bibliography.
- **For more details, see the marking rubric below**

Marking rubric for the final submission

Understanding

Score	Criteria
1	Demonstrates a poor understanding of the question/ the ideas discussed
2	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the question/ the ideas discussed, cites key information, and consults few key sources (even if not clearly cited)
3	Demonstrates a good understanding of the question/ the ideas discussed, and cites a variety of sources to back up claims
4	Demonstrates a very good understanding of the question/ the ideas discussed, and cites a wide variety of *reliable* and *well selected* sources to back up claims
5	Demonstrates an outstanding understanding or application of the ideas relevant to the question (in a way that is deep/ specialised) OR Touches on a lot of ideas that are relevant to the question (in a way that is broad/ generalised) AND has an almost comprehensive list of reliable, sophisticated, and carefully selected sources

Writing

Score	Criteria
1	Has minimal spelling mistakes. Has minimal grammar mistakes.
2	Meets the criteria for a score of 1 AND Not confusing to read (i.e., the word choice and structure aren't a barrier to comprehension).
3	Meets the criteria for a score of 2 AND Easy to read, for example: ● Uses appropriate words ● Each paragraph focuses on a single idea ● Paragraphs flow into each other ● Has a clear introduction and conclusion ● Has a clear thesis
4	Meets the criteria for a score of 3 AND Enjoyable to read, does all of these things in the list from [3] very well.
5	Meets the criteria for a score of 4 AND It is written in a way that enhances the essay's style, for example: ● Chooses words extremely precisely ● Uses interesting sentence structures ● Uses interesting paragraph structures ● Changes tone to emphasise a point

Quality of argument

Score	Criteria
1	Most ideas discussed are poorly represented/ irrelevant, and arguments for them are unconvincing
2	Most ideas discussed are well represented/ relevant, and arguments are fair
3	Most ideas discussed are well represented/ relevant, and arguments are well formulated, non-obvious, and somewhat convincing
4	Meets the criteria for a score of 3 AND Contributes something new/ valuable to the overall discussion as well as being substantive, balanced, and convincing.
5	Meets the criteria for a score of 4 AND Some of the ideas are unique to the essay writer, arguments are overall novel, compelling, and well evaluated (showing signs of reasoning transparency/ epistemic humility).

Impact

Score	Criteria
1	Makes some attempt to explain why their question/ topic is important to focus on OR makes some attempt to explain why their analysis/ proposed solution is useful/ tractable
2	Makes a good case for why their question/ topic is important to focus on OR makes a good case for why their analysis/ proposed solution is useful/ tractable
3	Meets the criteria for a score of 2 AND Has a strong and feasible conclusion
4	Meets the criteria for a score of 3 AND Has the potential to be impactful/ useful to those doing impactful work in some way
5	Meets the criteria for a score of 4 AND The conclusion/ proposed solution is impressive AND has the potential to be impactful/ useful to those doing impactful work in some way Impact has very clearly been taken into consideration, for example: ● Does [2] very well ● Evaluates the significance of multiple factors throughout (relating to impact) ● Identifies areas for further research/ exploration

Support

There are various ways in which the team behind the Cambridge High Impact Research Project helps facilitate your projects so they go as well as possible.

Supporting roles

The mentors

The mentors are the main value-add of this programme, they are world-leading experts in these areas of research. The mentors are here to support your progress in becoming a high impact researcher. The main responsibilities of the mentors include:

What the Mentors are here to do
- An hour meeting weekly to discuss your project In greater depth and to cover some of the skills required for high impact research
- An additional hour Across the week to help facilitate the teams in a more general way
- Reviewing the team's draft in order to provide feedback which can be used for the eventual report submission
- Providing more general context about the project-specific cause area, as well as advice about how to pursue high-impact research

*What the mentors are **not** here to do*
- To in any way produce content which will end up in the final report
- To conduct any research directly which contributes to the final product
- To help the team organise and schedule themselves and co-ordinate co-working.
- To deal with any interpersonal or otherwise issues which the team faces.
- Decide on which tasks ought to be delegated to whom.

Research Managers

The Research Manager is your main point of contact with the programme's organisation as a wholeI. It is their job to help track how the project is going and highlight any major shortcomings or weaknesses in the research. The research managers are only as good as you let them be. It's important to keep in contact with them and to be honest about how the projects are going. The Research Manager is also your first port of call for any issues your team has, interpersonally, or which you or your team lead feels that they're ill-equipped to solve. The research manager is not another member of your research team,
The research manager is there to help facilitate your research, leadership, writing, and organisational skills.

What the research managers are here to do
- Meet with the team for an hour a week to check on progress, comment on any problems you have, and generally help steer the project on track.
- In alternating weeks, this hour will be split across each member of the team in one-to-ones, which allows the team to express any problems they have which they may not feel comfortable sharing in the team as a whole. This is also an opportunity to get some more personal guidance about how the project fits into your personal development.
- Provide a first port of call for any well-being or community health issues which arise during the programme.
- Help conduct the review for continuation. What's part of the general responsibility to track the progress of the projects as the weeks go on.

- Regularly nudging individuals on the team in general on their goals, providing some extra accountability.
- Help with any logistics which may arise from unique research opportunities. For example, helping organise any trips which may be relevant to the

*What the research managers are **not** here to do*
- Helping in any capacity which directly contributes to either the research or any of the written content for the final report.
- Directly scheduling or micromanaging co-working sessions, mentor meetings, etc. Also, while it is a responsibility of the risk manager to make sure your scheduling is going well, this is not the same as doing the scheduling for your team.
- Taking decisions on behalf of the team, Deciding research direction, which topics to prioritise, etc. In cases where there is a dispute which becomes a difficult barrier to the project's health as a whole, it may be necessary for the research manager to intervene. But in most cases, this falls on the team.

Coworking weekends.

Each weekend, the office will be available for teams to work in collaboration with various desks around the office. This is a great opportunity for teams to collaborate, comment, interact with others on the chirp programme, and get face time with their research managers. Alongside this, we will have "lightning talks," which are 5-10 minute presentations that will cover various ideas and topics which you may not pick up through your research directly. These talks should provide you with some more general context about Effective Altruism Movemenet, high impact research, etc. If you wish to give one of these talks yourselves, there will be an opportunity for that also.

Other perks include:
- Free food provided for those who attend co-working weekends
- Access to high-quality monitors and standing desks
- An opportunity to collaborate with members of your own team as well as other mentees on the CHIRP programme more generally
- An opportunity to spend some more face-time with your research managers who will be around the weekend
- An opportunity to attend some quick talks which could help advance your skills with relation to research
- An opportunity to interact with the wider effective art tourism movement as well as many of the other exciting groups who are hosted at the Meridian office.
- **Somewhere regular to coordinate meetings with your team and otherwise call your own over the 8 weeks.**

The Meridian Office, Cambridge.

The Meridian Office is a hub in the centre of Cambridge which houses several organisations, all of which work on neglected areas. It houses the biosecurity hub, the AI Safety hub, and of course effective Altruism. in Cambridge, among others.It is also where all of the CHIRP events will be taking place, especially the co-working weekends. Those who'd like to have access to the Meridian office on a more permanent basis, you can apply here. Mention that you were referred to this as a CHIRP participant by Jian Xin Lim, and we can fast track your application

Awards

Overall, the Cambridge High Impact. CHIRP has **£2,000** worth of prizes to distribute over the entire programme. **£1,000** will be awarded to the team that, overall, we feel produced the best work. The other half will be distributed according to quality presentations, individual leadership, and a series of other awards. Below we outline in some more detail how we suspect these prices will be distributed.

The Outstanding Project Award (£1000)

This will be awarded to the team which, across both presentation and final report, produces the most outstanding piece of research in the entire programme. This would be split evenly across each member of the team. It is possible for a team to receive more than one prize.

The Outstanding Draft Award (£150)

This will be awarded to the team that produces the most outstanding draft, showing the most early progress towards the eventual final report. This will be split evenly among the team.

The Outstanding Presentation Award (£150)

This will be awarded to the team that produces the most Outstanding. presentation. The award would be split evenly among each member of the team.

The Outstanding Mentee Awards (£200)

This prize will be awarded to two individuals who we feel stood out in terms of their research skills, initiative and leadership. This will be awarded to them as individuals who will express their admiration for their outstanding contribution to their projects.

Our humble recommendation of how you might like to spend the money.

At the heart of the values of the Cambridge Impact Research Project is Prioritising doing the most good possible, often at the expense of our own personal desires.
However, we believe that the best way you can spend your prize money is on helping support yourself, so you can support others .

Spend your prize money on a trip as part of another project you're working on, or perhaps on an upgraded laptop to help you work more efficiently.

 So while you might be tempted to donate your winnings to a highly effective charity, which of course we'd highly admire and in most cases would recommend, we feel that if you invest in yourself this could have a higher return on investment. That is, you have so much potential to make the world a better place that it really is the right thing to do to support your own development as a high impact researcher.