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To Whom It May Concern,

It is my pleasure to write this reference for Diana Kazharova in support of her application to the MSc in Applied Cancer Science. During her five-week internship at the Champalimaud Foundation in 2023, where I work as a postdoctoral researcher in several projects dedicated to pulmonary immunophysiology and provide training to master students, PhD students, and visiting scientists, Diana demonstrated a keen aptitude for advanced scientific research and a strong foundation in the principles that underpin complex biological challenges.

Our research group investigates the interactions between neurons and innate lymphoid cells (ILCs) in murine models. Diana not only mastered complex techniques such as immunohistochemistry, immune cell isolation, primary cell culture, and standard murine procedures but also contributed to more complex methods like bone marrow transplantation and confocal microscopy. Her rapid acquisition of these skills speaks to her exceptional ability to conduct experimental techniques crucial for cancer biology research.

Equally impressive was Diana's theoretical engagement. She dedicated significant personal time to studying ILC biology and the neural innervation of the lung, arriving at her internship with a robust theoretical background. Her intellectual curiosity, combined with her ability to synthesize and apply new information, directly aligns with the critical analysis and originality required for the program she chose to study.

One of Diana's most notable contributions was her optimization of a protocol for culturing primary neurons. By integrating knowledge from literature and innovating with experimental conditions, she significantly improved neuronal viability *ex vivo*. This work exemplifies her capacity to apply the scientific method to address complex research questions, an essential skill for advancing cancer science. Diana consistently demonstrated exceptional critical thinking, strong organizational skills, and a collaborative mindset. Her ability to analyse complex data and extract meaningful insights significantly contributed to our team's progress, while her innovative approach to problem-solving played a pivotal role in optimizing our experiments. I am confident that she will effectively apply these skills to the challenges and opportunities presented by this program.

Moreover, Diana's communication skills are outstanding. She articulated her findings clearly in lab meetings and contributed detailed and accurate experimental records. Her ability to explain complex scientific principles and techniques makes her an asset in both academic and collaborative settings. In addition to her technical expertise, Diana's personal qualities set her apart. She is a kind, thoughtful, and reliable individual who builds positive relationships with her peers and mentors. Her genuine passion for learning and her dedication to supporting those around her make her not only a strong academic candidate, but also a pleasure to work with.

Perhaps most importantly, I'm truly convinced that Diana belongs in science. Her commitment to advancing knowledge is unwavering, and she possesses rare combination of intellect, creativity, and passion necessary to drive research innovation. I have absolute confidence in her potential to make significant scientific contributions, whether through exploring complex mechanisms in cancer or advancing innovative therapeutic

approaches. Diana has the determination and talent to leave a lasting impact and am certain she will surpass the expectations of your program while making meaningful progress in the field.

If further information is required, I would be happy to provide it. Please feel free to contact me at [maria.aliseychik@research.fchampalimaud.org](mailto:maria.aliseychik@research.fchampalimaud.org).

Kind regards,

Maria