

CRUK Convergence Science Centre

Guidelines:

Preliminary Applications for the
CRUK Convergence Science
Centre iPhD Award

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Intercalated PhD Preliminary Application Guidelines

These guidelines explain what we are looking for in preliminary proposals for the iPhD Award. Applications are welcome from Imperial and ICR academics working in convergence science to address an unmet need in cancer.

Please submit enquires and applications to: icr-imperial-convergence.centre@imperial.ac.uk
using the email title: **iPhD Preliminary Proposal 2023**

CALL DEADLINE

Call Deadline: September 29th, 2023

1. The CRUK Clinical Academic Training Programme

We are pleased to invite project proposals to the Clinical Academic Training Programme funded by Cancer Research UK (CRUK) to Imperial College London and the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR). The overarching goal of the Programme is to train the next generation of clinical academics who will become leaders in accelerating novel methodologies, technologies and therapies that will benefit cancer patients. Specifically, support is available for five intercalated PhDs (iPhD). The award will enable exceptional medical undergraduates who are interested in clinical academic careers to incorporate a PhD into their medical education. Studentships are fully funded inclusive of a generous stipend, home/EU fees and a fixed consumables rate over three years.

2. The iPhD

The iPhD is a three-year course undertaken by medical students enrolled at Imperial College School of Medicine. The medical undergraduate cohort provides a pool of approximately 400 prospective candidates for the iPhD awards. The College guidelines states that a PhD can only be undertaken after the successful completion of a BSc. Therefore, the iPhD will follow the 1-year intercalated BSc (iBSc) course run by Imperial. The PhD must be completed, including thesis submission within 3 years as students must re-enter their medical education in line with the start of the academic year.

3. Remit

The iPhD award is for proposals that are cancer-led and demonstrate the need for convergence science to address the research question. In the context of this programme, **convergence science** is defined as the bringing together of engineering, natural, physical, life and medical sciences to develop innovative ways to address challenges in cancer research and benefit cancer patients. This is achieved through multidisciplinary collaborations that integrate otherwise distinct approaches to co-create new tools, technologies and methodologies.

Applicants should articulate the cancer-related question(s) and outline the convergence approaches to addressing them. To produce successful clinical academics, we expect that the training they receive will expose them to scientific research across different disciplines.

4. Eligibility

Applications are invited from Imperial and ICR supervisors. We encourage cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary supervisory teams although Imperial academics from distinct disciplines working together are eligible to apply. Where the project has an ICR academic lead, an Imperial co-supervisor will need to be appointed as a requirement for the registration of the studentship at Imperial. Under current rules, a medical undergraduate cannot be registered at the ICR; however, students are able to spend their time working in ICR laboratories.

We are supportive of applications from newly independent academics and would encourage partnerships with senior academics with student supervision experience. All applicants should ensure that their contracts allow them to supervise students and that they will be supported for the duration of the project. In addition, applicants must guarantee access to the space and equipment necessary for successful completion of the studentship and gain endorsement from their head of department or division.

5. The Application Process

The application process comprises three stages:

- Preliminary applications – **covered by these guidelines**
- Establishing student–supervisor teams – **covered by these guidelines**
- Full application submission and interview

The purpose of the multiple stages is to provide sufficient flexibility to attract the best students to the right supervisory teams, who will jointly submit the full application. The process takes into account the restrictions of a defined cohort where some students may only consider applying for a PhD once they have commenced their BSc project.

5.1 Preliminary proposals

The preliminary application stage is to showcase the types of projects available to prospective students. Prior to showcasing the applications will be reviewed by the Clinical Academic Training Committee to ascertain whether they meet the remit (cancer-lead and taking a convergence science approach) of this programme. Where a project is not in remit, the Committee will offer guidance to the applicants on how they might modify the approach. Please complete the accompanying preliminary proposal application form and submit by **September 29th, 2023**.

5.2 Establishing student– supervisory teams

The preliminary proposals will be showcased to medical undergraduates in October 2023 who will review them and select up to three projects that they would like to undertake if interested to do a PhD. The supervisors will be notified, and meetings will be arranged to discuss the opportunity informally. Subsequent to the meetings the students will rank the projects in order of preference and the top ranked supervisors will be notified. Should you agree, you will work with them as a partner between **January and April 2024** to develop a comprehensive PhD project proposal. If a student is unsuccessful in gaining their top choice of project, their second choice will be made available to them.

To maximise the opportunity to identify student–supervisor teams, flexibility underpins this Programme, and the following 3 pathways are available to develop full PhD proposals:

1. Where the iBSc path and PhD proposal aligns

Given that there are 17 distinct iBSc pathways ([outlined here](#)), the supervisors preferred candidate may be enrolled on a pathway that allows the iBSc and PhD projects to be aligned. Supervisors could therefore choose to submit a BSc project proposal to this pathway for the student to undertake as a precursor to the PhD. However, the outputs of the iBSc research project cannot be submitted for the PhD degree. The iBSc research projects usually starts in January and lasts for 15 weeks. During the period January – April 2024, the student and supervisors will work to jointly submit a full PhD proposal. Further guidelines on submitting full proposals will be circulated after student–supervisor pairings are made.

2. Where the iBSc path and PhD proposal does not align

The preliminary PhD proposal may not align with the remit of the specific pathway in which the preferred candidate was enrolled. In this instance, candidate and supervisors work independently (January – April 2024) to develop and jointly submit a full PhD proposal. This approach ensures that the candidate pool is not restricted to those enrolled on iBSc pathways which fit the cancer/convergence science remit. Please note that a recent curriculum review by the Faculty of Medicine has reshaped the iBSc course to ensure that it is focussed on acquisition of critical skills including how to write research papers, how to analyse publications critically and the practical use of statistics. This will ensure that students enrolled in any of the iBSc pathways will have acquired skills applicable to a PhD.

3. *Where a student decides to do a PhD after starting their iBSc research project*

This approach acknowledges that not all students will be immediately research orientated at the start of their iBSc and highlights the need to offer PhD opportunities to those students who are enthused about scientific research during their 15-week iBSc project. In this pathway, either the student could submit a proposal with their iBSc project supervisors, or they could review the list of remaining preliminary PhD projects that would be showcased to them in January 2024 followed by connect meetings with supervisors. The supervisors would select their preferred candidate with whom they will work (January – April 2024) to submit a full PhD proposal. This approach also opens a further opportunity for supervisors who may not find a suitable candidate from approaches 1 or 2.

Guidance for submitting iBSc project proposals can be obtained emailing the Faculty of Medicine education team feo.bsc@imperial.ac.uk. For general enquires about aligning projects and further information on the iPhD Programme please send an email to the Convergence Science Centre team icr-imperial-convergence.centre@imperial.ac.uk.

5.3 Full application submission

Full applications will be submitted jointly by the student and supervisory team in **April 2024**. An interview with the Clinical Academic Training Committee will be arranged for the candidates, which will include the student and supervisory team to explore the quality, suitability and feasibility of the project for a PhD, the support provided by the supervisory team and the motivations of the candidate student. Decisions will be made in **May 2024** and the PhD will commence in **July 2024**. Guidelines for the full proposals will be released after student-supervisor pairings are made.

6. Key Dates Summary

Preliminary PhD proposals deadline – September 29th,
2023

Student-Supervisor Connect Meetings – October 2023

Full PhD proposal development – January – April 2024

Full PhD proposal deadline – April 2024

Interviews – May 2024

PhD commences – July 2024

7. Completing the Preliminary Proposal Application Form

Proposal Title: Please provide a short title that accurately summarises your project. Please note that the target audience is undergraduate medical students; we therefore encourage an engaging proposal title.

Supervisors: Please provide the name and contact details of the joint supervisors (Lead Supervisor 1 and 2, respectively). Please include any additional supervisors whom you deem necessary for the success of your project/student training. Please note that, because students are registered at Imperial, an Imperial member of staff *must* be included in the supervisory team.

Proposal outline: Please provide a short outline of the scientific aims and the convergence approach to be employed. Within this section, you may include any relevant preliminary data that supports your hypothesis and proposed approach (*up to two A4 pages including figures*). Please structure your proposal by answering the questions posed in this section of the application form. **In addition, please provide a 400-word summary which will be used to showcase your proposal to prospective candidates.**

8. How will we handle your application?

This is a joint partnership between Imperial and the ICR; therefore, a joint operations team will receive and process your application for expert reviews. By applying to this scheme, you agree that your information will be seen by individuals within both institutions. Preliminary applications will be listed on the Imperial /ICR websites for student viewing.

9. Do you have an enquiry?

Enquiries regarding this programme should be submitted to icr-imperial-convergence.centre@imperial.ac.uk.