



Clinical Academic Training Programme

Guidelines

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1. Introduction

We're committed to developing the next generation of world class clinical academic researchers. One way of doing this is through supporting a first-class, flexible training programme that attracts, trains and retains talented individuals to be research leaders of tomorrow.

Through the Clinical Academic Training (CAT) Programme Award our ambition is that aspiring clinician scientists will be able to reach their full potential. It is our expectation that this prestigious programme will provide medical students and clinical trainees with academic training and with the support, network and skills required to pursue a successful clinical academic career.

The CAT Programme Award is provided by us for the provision of doctoral training through integrated MB-PhD training and Clinical Research Training Fellow (CRTF) postgraduate study. We expect our funded students to receive exceptional, high quality training packages as described in our [Expectations for PhD training](#).

These guidelines are intended to support the programme lead(s) and training lead(s) in managing the CAT Programme Award through highlighting our expectations and signposting relevant information and policies.

Acceptance of a CAT Programme Award constitutes acceptance of [our Grant Conditions](#) and [Expectations for PhD training](#).

For all enquiries and queries regarding your CAT Programme Award, please contact the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk.

2. Guidelines for your clinical academic training programme

The CAT Programme Award is provided by us for the provision of doctoral training through integrated MB-PhD training and CRTF postgraduate study. Much of the detailed management of your CAT Programme Award, such as peer review of

projects, recruitment and selection of MB-PhD students and CRTFs and the financial management of the CAT Programme Award, is devolved to the CAT Programme lead(s) and programmatic governance boards.

2.1. Recruiting CRTFs and MB-PhD students

The CAT Programme lead(s) or governance board, hereafter referred to as ‘the Programme’, may allocate MB-PhD studentships and CRTFs to trainees and research projects deemed appropriate, in line with the Centre’s or university’s strategy, abiding by the university’s local regulations and eligibility criteria, and taking account of our conditions outlined in our [Expectations for PhD training](#).

Please contact the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk if there are any unforeseen difficulties with MB-PhD or CRTF recruitment.

2.2. Engaging with regional medical schools

We want to attract the best medical students and clinical trainees to careers in academic cancer research, and therefore encourage the programmes to actively engage with local and regional medical schools to promote opportunities for talented medical students and trainees to gain research experience within our Centre(s).

We are keen for the programmes to work together with INSPIRE leads at the relevant medical schools to promote oncology and ensure that cancer research has a high profile among academically-focused medical students and trainees (INSPIRE scheme coordinated by the Academy of Medical Sciences).

2.3. Expectations for training specific for CATP

The programmes are encouraged to arrange an introductory meeting with all newly recruited MB-PhD students and CRTFs and outline the training and support

that is available through the programme, Centre(s), us and the host institution.

We view the training, support and development of our funded researchers as essential components of the CAT Programme. As such, the expectations outlined in the [principles and obligations of clinical academic training for doctors and dentists](#), of which we are a signatory, should be adhered to. This cross-funder statement sets out the expectations of host institutions, deaneries, trainees and funders for clinical academic training in the UK. It aims to ensure that clinical academic trainees are appropriately supported within the university and NHS in an integrated, flexible and personalised way.

We expect that all institutions hosting our funded clinical academics will adopt these principles, which form part of our terms and conditions for awards involving clinical academic trainees. We will be working with the programmes to review the implementation of the principles.

Additional expectations for PhD training including but not limited to flexible working, extensions, suspensions and terminations of studentships, failure to convert to doctoral studies at the end of year one and our policies on annual and parental, sick or other long-term leave are outlined in our [Expectations for PhD training](#).

2.4. Supervision of students

We believe that it is essential that each student receives support and supervision specific to their needs at each stage of their training and career.

We expect that MB-PhD students and CRTFs will be fully supported by the dedicated training leads and partnered with an academic and a clinical supervisor to ensure successful completion of their doctoral training and re-integration into medical studies or clinical training, respectively.

If the supervisor of a student funded by the CAT Programme leaves, funds of the award cannot be transferred to locations outside of the respective CAT Programme. We envisage that an appropriate alternate supervisor will be identified within the CAT Programme location(s) for the remainder of the studentship.

2.5. Mentoring

We believe that mentorship is an essential component of the training programme, providing the support and guidance needed to increase the numbers of medical students and clinicians continuing in clinical academic careers and transitioning to clinician scientists.

As part of the CAT Programme, all our MB-PhD students and CRTFs should have a clinical academic mentor for the duration of their studentship/fellowship. The mentor should ideally be outside the mentee's direct line management and academic supervision. Where possible and appropriate, the mentor and mentee should be from the same medical specialty.

We consider informal mentoring approaches, e.g. peer-to-peer mentoring to be beneficial and valuable in terms of shared learnings and networking. We encourage the programmes to support and facilitate both formal and informal mentoring relationships.

2.6. Retaining links to clinical training

We expect there to be a clear strategy for the successful re-integration of MB-PhD students into their medical training and of CRTFs back into clinical specialty training. Successful MB-PhD programmes offer a course mentor with both clinical and scientific training to enable problems to be identified and rectified early during the programme. It is highly recommended that such mentorship is provided at each site. Some MB-PhD programmes offer bedside teaching over one session per week with case tutorials during the PhD training period, in order for trainees to maintain links with clinical training. MB-PhD students should be given the flexibility to undertake limited clinical training or specific tutorials during their PhD training, if deemed to be essential for the completion of their undergraduate medical training, enabling them to be in alignment with the curriculum on their return to undergraduate studies.

It is considered beneficial that CRTFs are guided both with scientific expertise for their research, but also continue to retain and develop their excellence in the clinic. This can be achieved through continued contact within their clinical setting (approximately two to three hours per week) to maintain their skills and relationships with colleagues.

2.7. Post programmatic support

Flexible early postdoctoral training fund

This flexible fund offers flexible, locally tailored pathways into postdoctoral training and strengthens continued development and retention of clinical trainees on the clinical academic pathway.

Guiding principles of this fund:

- Funds proportionate to the size of individual CAT Programmes, and will be issued from Year 3 for the remainder of the current CAT Programmes quinquennium.
- Short-term and small-scale funds to help position trainees for the next step in their clinical academic careers.
- Flexibility for CAT Programmes to decide where to direct the funds.
- Priority for supporting clinical trainees embedded in CATPs, but flexibility to support talent outside of the programmes.
- CAT Programmes encouraged to support early postdoctoral training in strategic areas, aligned to our research strategy.
- CAT Programmes encouraged to leverage additional funding to maximise the impact of the fund.
- Our institutes encouraged to work with CAT Programmes to support clinical trainees.

Post MB-PhD support and opportunities

We envisage that the MB-PhD student would return to their clinical training on a full-time basis until completion of their MBBS or equivalent.

We expect programmes will:

- ensure that MB-PhD students and their mentors maintain their mentoring relationship during the transition to clinical studies up to completion of their MBBS
- maintain engagement with former MB-PhD students funded by us, and are invited to networking and cohort building events

As a graduate, there could be an opportunity to remain research active during FY1/FY2 of clinical training.

Post PhD support for CRTFs

We envisage that CRTFs would return to their clinical specialty training and aim to remain research active to a degree until they've completed their clinical training (CCT).

We consider that it would be beneficial for programmes to:

- ensure that CRTFs and their mentors maintain their mentoring relationship during the transition to clinical training and beyond
- maintain engagement with former CRTFs funded by us
- promote and plan opportunities well in advance of CRTFs returning to training to continue their clinical academic careers – for example through offering Clinical Lectureship, or similar positions
- consider funding partial salary support (e.g. 50% FTE) for talented clinical academic trainees to enable a research component as part of their clinical training (e.g. postdoctoral training fellowships)

- provide training and support for talented clinical academic trainees to prepare postdoctoral fellowship applications

The [Academy of Medical Sciences](#) support clinical fellows and clinical academics at all stages of their careers. Their academic medicine website includes useful information about clinical research careers and links to other resources.

Visit the [Clinical Academic Training and Careers Hub](#) to view career pathways available to clinical academics from funders across the UK.

Please visit our website for further information on [funding opportunities](#).

3. Managing the clinical academic training programme award funding

3.1. The level of funding

The value of each CAT Programme Award is primarily based on a set number of MB-PhD studentships and CRTF posts each year. This may vary from year to year at each location, depending on the training model proposed and strategy of implementation. Please inform the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk, if in any given year, the number of CRTFs and/or MB-PhD posts differs from the allocated figures.

Funding is provided for MB-PhD and CRTF posts for a three year duration, however the PhD studentship can be completed over four years, if required, but without additional funding from us. The programme should contact the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk to discuss extending the PhD training duration for individuals. The CAT Programme Award will be issued as a one full duration award in the form of an annual Grant Award Letter (GAL) that combines funds for allocated MB-PhD, CRTFs, postdoctoral support and programme related costs as appropriate. Annual instalments of the award are issued in March, following a programme annual review process.

3.1.1. MB-PhD student funding

MB-PhD funding is based on a three-year PhD on a full-time basis. The level of funding for an MB-PhD is based on estimated average costs of trainees, and it should be sufficient to pay for the full costs of these posts. The table below details the total funding support for a studentship inside and outside of London, in Cambridge, Oxford and Scotland.

Studentship location	Total fund for MB-PhD
Outside London	£169,133*
Inside London	£175,675*
Cambridge	£182,100*
Oxford	£180,438*
Scotland	£124,133

*For GALs issued by 31st March 2026. *Includes £45k clinical undergraduate tuition fees*

A further breakdown of MB-PhD funding is detailed below.

- The student will be paid our standard stipend. Our PhD stipends are regularly reviewed.
- Eligible MB-PhD students will be able to request additional funding to cover their clinical undergraduate tuition fees; for further details see below.

	Running expenses*	MB-PhD fees*	Oxford College fees	Cambridge College fees	Stipend inside London*	Stipend outside London*
PhD Y1	£13,500	£4,662	£3,768	£4,322	£24,643	£22,500
PhD Y2	£13,736	£4,744	£3,768	£4,322	£25,074	£22,894
PhD Y3	£13,977	£4,827	£3,768	£4,322	£25,513	£23,294
Total	£41,213	£14,232	£11,305	£12,967	£75,300	£68,688

**Adjusted for 1.75% indexation. As per 1 April 2025, we have increased the baseline stipend by 5.3% from the previous year.*

Should the duration of the PhD training element of an MB-PhD studentship exceed three years, please contact us at research.careers@cancer.org.uk.

MB-PhD tuition fee payment process and policy

For the MB-PhD students, the award will include funds to cover the undergraduate medical school tuition fees.

- The GALs will include the MB-PhD fees costed for all students (except for Scotland programme). Full duration fees will be provided.
- Fees will be ring-fenced on the GALs and cannot be used for any other purpose. Unspent funds will be reconciled at the end of the award.
- CAT Programmes (not the student) will be responsible for the payment to the Student Loans Company (SLC) accounts using the funds provided in the GALs.

Which students will be eligible for tuition fee payment?

We will cover the tuition fees for all those students who are liable to pay fees, irrespective of circumstances.

Eligible:

- UK students studying in England
- International students (including EU) for tuition fees at home rates*
- UK students (except Scottish) studying in Scotland

Not eligible:

- Scottish and EU students studying in Scotland as the fees are covered by the Scottish Government
- Any other students who do not pay tuition fees

*We will only cover tuition fees at a rate no higher than the home fees up to the value of £9,250/per year plus interest (where appropriate).

Students who haven't taken out a loan but are required to pay tuition fees are eligible but will require an alternative method of reimbursing (note that only costs of the tuition fees will be reimbursed as there will be no interest).

How often will the payments be made?

- One payment (to be undertaken by the CAT Programmes) will be made into the students' loan company account at the end of their final year of medical school undergraduate course.
- To help minimise the total loan amount accruing interest, CAT Programmes may structure their repayment schedule as they wish, provided the final invoice to us is submitted in the last year of the award.
- We are committed to paying the full costs of the tuition fees and interest earned. For ease, we have calculated the costs to be up to £45,000 for four years (4 x £9,250 + interest). Centres will need to know the interest rates used for when the loan(s) were taken out to calculate the total amount to pay and will also be required to review the student's loan statement to check the existing balance.

- Some students will have taken out loans to cover fees and maintenance costs, this will be presented on the statement as one total balance. The payment can be made to this account.

How many years of fees will we fund?

We will fund the number of years of fees that the student is required to pay, as outlined below:

- We will fund the fees for the first four years of the standard medical school undergraduate course. Year 5 of a five-year course, and years 5 and 6 of a six year course, are covered by the NHS and as such we will not fund these.
- For graduate entry medical students, we will cover the first two years' tuition fees of the degree, plus interest. Years 3 and 4 are covered by the NHS and therefore we will not provide funds for these years.

Please advise us of any local course duration differences, or if the assumptions above are incorrect.

How will the payment to the Student Loans Company (SLC) operate?

A template outlining what information is needed has been provided by the SLC (see appendix). Ahead of payments, please advise SLC when to expect the funds to aid the processing. SLC has been extremely supportive and worked with us to ensure that the process is as simple as possible.

If a student does not have a SLC account, how will the fees be paid?

- For those students without a loan, programmes will need to manage the payment. Evidence that fees have been paid to the university will be required.
- Programmes will also need to be reassured that the funds are being used for this purpose. Specific wording about this will be added to the GAL cover letter.

- Depending on each student's individual circumstances, and in order to avoid tax and repayment challenges, it is likely that flexibility will be needed regarding the payment options.
 - For example, it may be necessary to distribute the payments over five years: Year 1 of PhD: £5K, Year 2 of PhD: £5K, Year 3 of PhD: £5K, Year 4 (undergrad): £11K, and Year 5 (undergrad): £11K. It is unlikely that interest will have been accrued and therefore just the costs of the tuition fees will be reimbursed.
- If the student fails to complete their PhD or return to their undergraduate medical course, annual payments will cease. We will not require funds already paid to cover tuition fees to be refunded.

3.1.2. CRTF funding

For CRTFs, we allocate a fixed amount for all CAT Programmes for three years. The CRTF funding level for GALs issued by 31 March 2026 is £292,316.

This amount is based on estimated average costs of trainees. Please note that the value of running expenses and PhD fees is expected to be the same for CRTFs and MB-PhD students, and that CRTF salaries are equivalent to the NHS salary scale. Generally, CRTFs should still be undertaking professional training and would be expected to return to a training programme in the UK on completion of the research degree.

We recognise that the amount awarded will not always cover costs for the number of CRTFs allocated. There are no restrictions in terms of the clinical training level at which clinicians can be recruited. However, the programme should note that the recruitment of more senior trainees will have to be accounted for in the overall CAT Programme budget. The overall funding envelope can be used flexibly, provided it aligns with the conditions of the award. This flexibility may include actions such as virement from the CRTF consumables budget, adjusting the number of CRTFs recruited in future years or reallocating funds from unfilled MB-PhD posts to cover CRTF salaries.

3.1.3. Uses of funding

Allowable costs for students include: salary/stipend, fees, research running expenses, travel, conference fees, accommodation and subsistence if the student is presenting, workshops and training.

For all students, both UK and international, we will fund university fees at a rate no higher than the home fees applied to students funded by UK Research Councils. International students may be recruited to our grants, but any shortfall between our standard fee allowance and applicable international student fee rates must be covered by another source of funding and can't be covered by the student themselves.

It is not acceptable to use the CAT Programme funding for:

- supporting non-clinical PhD students
- out of hours/on call costs
- recruitment and advertising costs

Please contact the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk if you would like to discuss other uses of the CAT Programme funding.

3.1.4. Utilising underspend from CRTF and MB-PhD funds

The Research Careers & Culture team should be informed of any underspends on your award. We have listed some options how you could use underspend from your annual CAT Programme Award below.

Suggested uses of remaining funding may include:

- implementation of activities proposed within your programme-related costs (that could not be supported through the level of funding originally provided)
- support for mentoring activities for MB-PhD students and CRTFs

- support for scientific and networking meetings for clinical academic trainees working in cancer research locally/regionally
- student travel to collaborating group to undertake specific training relevant to their PhD studies, or to attend a skills-based training course directly relating to their work
- support for continued networking/ cohort building activities of MB-PhD and CRTFs reintegrating into medical and clinical training respectively
- undergraduate vacation placements for MB-PhD students
- support for short periods of research by Academic Clinical Fellows or Foundation Year medical trainees, prior to undertaking a CRTF
- engagement activities for undergraduate trainees to raise the profile of oncology
- funding for the development and implementation of relevant courses in oncology for undergraduate students
- support for oncology-related MSc courses
- post programmatic support as per section 2.7

Please contact the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk if you would like to discuss other uses of your CAT Programme funding underspend.

3.2. Information gathering and sharing

As previously highlighted, one of our strategic priorities is to train the next generation of cancer research leaders. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to us to know our students, their research projects, outputs and career progression. The information collected will allow us to communicate directly with the students, welcome them to our community and invite them to training and networking events. It will also allow us to accurately report on their research and outputs, and to understand their motivation to continue a career in cancer research, improving our training provision.

Gathering information about the CAT Programme

We are interested to learn how the programme is progressing and how we can best support you. Therefore, we are keen to hear about any challenges that you may face and any suggestions on how to improve support for the trainees. We encourage you to share this information with us informally through our site visits, emails and phone calls throughout the year.

Please get in contact with the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk if you would like to us to visit or attend any relevant meetings/ events at your Centre/host institution.

The Research Careers & Culture team will be in touch with more information about the programme's annual review process and what information we'd like you to include.

Gathering information about students

Programmes will be asked to provide data on new students and any changes to currently active students via the programme's annual review process.

As explained in our [Expectations for PhD training](#), all students must register their projects on Flexi-Grant within one month of their project start date. Students will be asked to register a ResearchFish account, our official research reporting tool, and to submit their research outputs on an annual basis and for those students who have finished their studentship, to share their career plans after their PhD. This information will be invaluable in helping us to improve the support and training offered to current and future students.

Please contact the Research Careers & Culture team at research.careers@cancer.org.uk if you have any queries about the process.

Appendix – Template MB-PhD tuition fee repayments

Company Name:		
Date:		
Payment ref no: A		
Expected BACS Date: B		
SLC Ref No: C	Customer Name (D)	Amount £ E
	TOTAL (F)	£0.00

Send to finance_agents@slc.co.uk (G)
 Financial
_Ops_Team@slc.co.uk

Template key		
Payment ref no:	Ref no quoted on backups should relate to BACS payment. Also to be used for any queries with regards to the backup received.	A
Date BACS Paid	The date we should expect the payment to be in our bank account	B
Ref no:	CRN no? If this is quoted all repayments will be split across all loan accounts relating to this mgt a/c	C
Customer Name	The customer (student name) who the funds are from and to ensure finance apply to the correct a/c	D
Amount:	The amount that the student paid and should be applied to the students account	E
Total	The total amount paid on the spreadsheet which should also agree to the BACS file sent	F
Email	Address to send Backup file	G
Contacts	To be provided by SLC and yourselves to be able to contact should there be any issues with payments or reference numbers	
<i>Points to note</i>	<i>No refunds can be given</i>	
	<i>SLC are unable to provide any settlement quotation to yourselves</i>	
	<i>SLC are unable to provide any information in regard to customer accounts to yourself.</i>	

