

Continuing the CRUK MB-PhD journey: from PhD submission to onward clinical-academic career

Guiding summary of the MB-PhD programme post-submission

It is important to recognise the wider educational pathway in the MB-PhD journey. This document sets out the opportunities and conditions under which the student can succeed not only in their MB-PhD, but throughout their onward training and early career.

This document provides guidance, expectations, and broad timelines for continued support of the PhD student, as they reintegrate into their clinical training. Although this is written from the CRUK MB-PhD programme point of view, it has the broad support of the medical programme, and the MCRC shares the view that both programmes have equal importance.

Submission arrangements for MB-PhD students

Students follow standard submission processes with the UoM's Doctoral Academy. An MB-PhD student's online eProg record will show commencement of the PhD from 1st October, with Doctoral Academy registration from mid-September. Their end date will show as 30th September as this is the same for all UoM 1st October PhD starters and cannot be amended to account for the MB-PhD. However, MB-PhD students must submit their PhD thesis no later than the end of August in their returning year. This is to allow full-time induction back into the MBChB in September. A mid-August submission is preferred by the MB-PhD programme, as this enables students to have a short break prior to returning to a full-time MBChB timetable.

Viva arrangements for MB-PhD students

The supervisory team should aim for the viva to be held late-November or early-December of each academic year. This ensures enough time for viva preparation for examiners and will avoid the medical school assessment period. Students should recognise that the timing of the viva is frequently determined by availability of the examiners.

MCRC confirms hospitals bases with the medical school and the programmes will aim to facilitate placements for students close to their bases during their period of viva-preparation, ensuring minimum disruption to both programmes.

There is no time given in core course hours for viva-preparation, and any time off requested will go through the existing 'approved absences' process on the medical programme. Supervisory teams may hold a mock viva as preparation but should work around the students' course hours.

Viva results

Conversations around corrections should be had early so that students can strike an appropriate balance between the MB-PhD and MBChB programmes. The MCRC recognises that the MBChB and clinical training must take priority at this stage.

Any major re-writes will be managed through a bespoke process as agreed across the two programmes, co-led by the Chair of the MB-PhD programme, and the MBChB programme director.

Early submission

For exceptions to the standard submission timelines, e.g. early submission:

- The Lead Supervisor and student should co-produce an outline of a proposed submission date, considering quality of project, student preparedness, and quality of submission.
- The MCRC MB-PhD committee will review and flag any concerns with the Lead Supervisor and student, and suggest and agree amends.
- The MBChB Programme Director will be informed of the proposed submission date where appropriate.

The MCRC endorses early submission, taking into account the below:

- MCRC's position – students should notify their intention to submit early as soon as is practically possible, and no later than 4 months before the intended submission date. We must look after the interests of the student, above all, and take into wider considerations (such as financial circumstances, wellbeing, and precedent setting) when making decisions on early submission.
- CRUK's position – early submission is permitted in principle, but sufficient time to complete and submit the project properly should be guaranteed. Stipends would stop on submission, as per other projects.
- MBChB programme position – submission before the student re-starts their MBChB programme will support the student's successful reintroduction into their medical studies.

Role of the lead supervisor

The lead supervisor should identify an appropriate contact for the student post-submission to serve as a mentor after the student passes their viva examination. This is usually the lead supervisor themselves but could be another nominated person if this was deemed more appropriate.

The lead supervisor's role changes to post-submission mentor and is ultimately to keep open research opportunities for the student as they progress through the MBChB, noting that the student will have very little research time set aside in the MBChB, and the MBChB and its placements must be the priority.

Lead supervisor's roles include:

- encouraging publication opportunities.
- access to their laboratory and consumables budgets, as appropriate, to encourage the student to access experiments and the wider group (providing this does not disrupt MBChB core hours).
- signposting relevant and manageable research opportunities alongside the student's medical degree, this could include lab groups, journal clubs etc.
- continuous conversations about career and research opportunities post-medical degree.
- scheduling 6-monthly meeting with the student for research and career planning (this could include inviting the student to lab meetings).
- exploring opportunities for continued research opportunities outside of the immediate lab, such as allied labs, or as an MCRC ambassador.

Role of the MCRC Training and Education team

The MCRC will provide continued support and training, to ensure that the intercalated PhD pathway becomes a viable career mechanism, and that students are supported into and beyond their medical degrees. We:

- give students access to an MB-PhD alumni network, aiming to expand this across the CRUK network.

- forward relevant research and conference opportunities to students, including ambassadorship roles for the programme.
- hold responsibility for ensuring that lead supervisors/mentors are carrying out their role.

Our role in relation to UoM MBChB programme

The UoM MBChB programme has its own duty of care to returning students. MB-PhD students will not have a separate induction outside of the standard induction for all MBChB students at the start of the academic year but can contact MBChB Year Leads with any queries in advance of their return.

The MCRC promotes the ongoing benefits of continued contact with the research community and will accommodate requests from the medical school where reasonably implementable.

We aim to build a cooperative relationship to the benefit of returning students, so that pragmatic decisions on how to manage their return can be made, whilst retaining the concept of the MB-PhD as a continuing journey. This will include:

- ensuring appropriate clinical skills via induction sessions, including promoting options for students to build upon their research interests as part of their clinical training where possible, such as through electives, PEP and support in applying for foundation training/SFP. Induction sessions will not be MB-PhD specific and will be part of the standard induction for the student's returning year. It is essential that students engage with induction following their time out from the MBChB programme.
- working alongside placement teams so that students are placed in appropriate 'blocks' around their viva and there is minimal disruption. Returning students can put in placement-related requests via their returning Hospital Programme Leads to support viva prep, e.g. not having to undertake remote placements during the initial months of their return or avoiding undertaking week-long placements in Year 4 arranged around viva time. Students can use their 1Med Programme Handbook to access the details of their Hospital Programme Leads and/or administrative staff and should contact them in the Spring before their return to the MBChB to maximise the chance of their request being accommodated.
- supporting students applying for 'approved absences' when MCRC finds suitable opportunities for presenting at conferences.
- using Centre contacts to provide links with research institutions for electives and sharing knowledge and links to foundation training options which would complement the PhD field.

Year Leads

All intercalators, including MB-PhDs should meet with their Hospital Year Leads prior to returning to the MBChB. During this meeting, they can discuss any support needed for their return. See bullet point 2 above for contact details.

Funding for Open Access publishing

The University of Manchester has block funding for Cancer Research UK researchers' Open Access (OA) papers. You can find details of this at the Library's [weblink](#). MB-PhD students who have completed their PhD and returned to their MBChB are still eligible for OA funding. Any accepted manuscripts should be deposited, with funding details included, as soon as possible via the [Open Access Gateway](#). Journals must either be fully Open Access, or covered by an [OA publishing agreement](#).

Post-PhD undergraduate tuition fee bursary

To support students to undertake a PhD before completing their initial medical training, CRUK has committed to funding four years of each student's undergraduate medical tuition fees at the UK/home fee rate (£9,250/annum). CRUK will also pay interest of up to £8,000 per student, if a student has been charged interest on a SLC or personal loan.

Eligibility

MB-PhD students will have different financial circumstances, such as tuition fee loans with the Student Loans Company (SLC) and/or personal loans/financial support from family. Each CRUK MB-PhD student (home or international) who pays undergraduate medical fees is eligible for the post-PhD undergraduate tuition fee bursary at the UK/home fee rate only, regardless of the method in which they have obtained MBChB fee funding. This bursary will be paid after the PhD and the MCRC Training Office will work with each student ahead of their return to UG medicine to agree a suitable method of reimbursement in advance.

An MB-PhD student will be rendered ineligible for the post-PhD undergraduate tuition fee bursary if:

- exiting the PhD programme
- failing to return to medical school following thesis submission or viva
- failing to resubmit their thesis if re-submission is recommended following the viva.

For an MB-PhD student awarded no degree at viva, any subsequent payments/reimbursements of undergraduate tuition fees will cease. We will not seek to reclaim payments already made.

For an MB-PhD student awarded an MPhil instead of a PhD, the MCRC-CRUK Manchester Centre Training Office will still consider reimbursement their four years of undergraduate medical school fees, with mitigating evidence.

Methods of reimbursement

We can pay UoM medical school directly for students' undergraduate tuition fees at re-entry to Years 3 and/or 4 of the MBChB. We cannot pay UG tuition fees prior to PhD entry and students will need to pay for these themselves anticipating later reimbursement if accepted onto the MB-PhD programme. We can make partial payments for international MB-PhD students' returning undergraduate tuition fees, recognising that this bursary is only offered at the UK/home rate.

We can make payments directly to SLC (see below). We can also reimburse tuition fees/loans already paid/obtained via a post-PhD monthly bursary paid directly to students on their return to medical school. Details of the best method of reimbursement will be agreed between the MCRC Training Office and students, recognising students' differing individual circumstances.

Student Finance England

Students with an SLC account must not close this down and should instead list their post-PhD tuition fee/s as £0, if the MCRC Training Office will be paying a student's returning undergraduate fees directly to the medical school (e.g. the student does not need a new tuition fee loan for these years). We will need to be added to your SLC account on an ongoing basis to make payments to them for tuition fee loans already obtained. You can do this via returning the [Ongoing consent to share form](#) that SLC have made available on their [website](#). We strongly encourage you to do this as far in advance of your return to medical school as possible.

Appendix A – Generic timeline

Date	Action	Responsible	
Final year of PhD	February	MB-PhD programme reconfirm returning MB-PhD students with UoM MBChB programme	MCRC/ MBChB
	April-May	Students engage in year return planning with Hospital Programme Leads	Student/CECs
	August	MB-PhD programme confirm financial plan for returning students with UoM MBChB programme and UoM Student Finance	MCRC/MBChB/SF
	Mid-August	Anticipated submission of PhD thesis	MCRC/UoM Doctoral Academy
	End of August	Final PhD thesis submission deadline	MCRC/UoM Doctoral Academy
	Early September onwards	Induction and return to medical studies and placements	MBChB
	August-November	Viva preparation	MCRC
	Late November-early December	Viva and start of corrections – medical school informed of outcome, with resulting processes as appropriate	MCRC
Ongoing	Duration of year 4 and 5 medical school	Mutual seeking/offering opportunities between the programmes to develop the student as a clinician-academic, with focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEP/SSCP/elective opportunities • speaking at conferences • continued contact with PhD lab and others 	MBChB/student
	Foundation training/ Specialised Foundation Programme	3-month annual placement which could be supported through original supervisors so that specific research interests can be built upon in foundation training	MCRC/ MBChB/Local Foundation School (if placed in the North West)