Cancer Research UK Clinical Academic Training Fellowships at The Institute of Cancer Research and Imperial College London

Guidance for supervisors

These guidelines explain the process of applying for a CRUK-funded Clinical Academic Training Fellowship at The Institute of Cancer Research and Imperial College, London. Please read this guidance carefully before submitting an expression of interest.

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Background

We are pleased to announce the launch of the CRUK Clinical Academic Training Fellowships Programme.

These prestigious PhD fellowships will support the training of future clinical academic leaders in cancer research. Trainees will receive world-class training in fundamental cell and molecular biology, therapeutics, radiotherapy, surgery, and convergence science through the ICR-Imperial Convergence Science Centre. This will equip clinical academics with the expertise to discover, develop, and deliver the next generation of treatments, technologies, and methodologies.

Throughout the application process, candidates will have to demonstrate their ambition to pursue a clinical academic career, as well as ownership of their project. Applicants from a range of specialties are invited to apply, including oncology, paediatrics, radiology, surgery, genetics, and anaesthesia.

What is available?

CRUK-funded fellowships via a central recruitment process. Fellowships are typically three years in duration and will provide:

- a clinical salary;
- PhD registration fees at the UK rate; *and*
- research running costs
- **Award amount is £265,452**

Convergence versus single-discipline projects

For ICR-registered students, cross-institutional and/or convergence science projects are encouraged, where genuine synergies exist. However, single-discipline, single-institution based projects are also welcome.

For Imperial-registered students, convergence science projects with a supervisory team reflecting diverse expertise are ***strongly*** encouraged. The supervisory team can consist of a mix of academics from Imperial and the ICR, or solely Imperial-based academics—and should feature distinct disciplines working in collaboration.

N.B. Convergence science is defined as the bringing together of engineering, physical sciences, life sciences, and medicine 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.

Strategic themes

The scientific focus of this programme reflects the priority research themes of both institutions and the joint ICR-Imperial Convergence Science Centre. In addition to aligning to the priority themes, projects should align to one or more of the core research areas of focus for this Programme, which are:

- understanding the molecular basis, evolution, and complexity of cancer;
- increasing the precision of cancer treatments (including systemic therapies, radiotherapy, and surgery);
- mechanisms of therapeutic action, resistance, and therapy monitoring;
- decreasing the overall burden of cancer (including early detection approaches); *and*
- data-driven healthcare

What is the recruitment process?

Applicants and supervisors make one joint application for fellowship funding, based on a project developed together.

Step 1: Call for expressions of interest from potential supervisors

ICR Faculty and Honorary Faculty, and eligible supervisors at Imperial, are invited to submit an expression of interest (EOI) by completing the survey at https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/icr/clinical-academic-training-programme-expressions-of-interest-sp

An EOI contains:

- a broad project title/area;
- a short paragraph outlining the project area (usually around 300 words);
- details of the supervisory team; *and*
- any clinical specialties required.

Before submitting an EOI, you should ensure that you fulfil the eligibility criteria to supervise a PhD student as outlined by your home institution/department. ICR Faculty and Honorary Faculty should consult the MPhil/PhD Code of Practice. The relevant administrative teams will screen the EOIs for supervisor eligibility and strategic fit (see the “Strategic themes” section, above).

You should also note the following:

- supervisors are only allowed to advertise one EOI; *and*

- fellowships will not be allocated to the same supervisor if they successfully recruit a candidate in the previous year.

If you don't have much experience supervising PhD students you should either:

- Imperial supervisors should have an experienced supervisor on your supervisory team; *or*
- ICR supervisors must include an Institute Recognised Supervisor as the secondary supervisor and have a secure contract that extends at least to the end of the studentship, or put in place suitable arrangements for the transfer of supervision by the time the proposed fellowship is submitted for approval.

Step 2: Project advertising and candidate identification

Eligible project areas will be advertised on the ICR and/or Imperial websites, via the British Medical Journal, and via email to specific mailing lists at both institutions.

Potential fellowship candidates will be asked to contact the ICR Registry in the first instance. They will then receive further details about the projects available. Once the first deadline has passed, the details of all candidates will be provided to all recruiting supervisors so that they can contact candidates.

Supervisors will select one candidate to work with, write to them, and then submit a full application.

Step 3: Proposal development and submitting a full application

The supervisory team and candidate should jointly develop a project proposal using an application form, which includes the project background, aims, methodologies and techniques, references, and a lay summary. Application forms should be submitted by email to admissions@icr.ac.uk.

Step 4: Shortlisting and interview

Where necessary, the ICR-Imperial Clinical Academic Training Fellowship interview panel will shortlist full applications based on the following criteria:

- scientific rationale and objectives;
- methodology and design;
- feasibility and likelihood of successful delivery;
- the candidate's CV; *and*
- strategic alignment to Convergence Science themes or ICR research strategy.

Successful candidates will be invited to interview. The interview will explore candidates' understanding of the strengths and limitations of the proposed project, and why they are the best candidate to undertake the research. The candidate will be asked about their research experience, career motivations, and plans for developing a clinical academic career. The panel will also consider the suitability of the training environment provided by the supervisor and their capacity for mentoring the trainee. They will also review the spread of disciplines represented under the programme when awarding the fellowships.

Recommendations for the award of fellowships will be ratified by the Convergence Science Centre Executive Management Committee.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed (both in the written application and at interview) on the:

- scientific and clinical importance of the project;
- need within the project for clinical knowledge and experience;

- feasibility of the project;
- suitability of the supervisory team to support the fellow;
- convergence science approach—for Imperial /cross-institution supervisors only; *and*
- candidate's track record in their clinical career, and their research interest/potential e.g. academic training positions, publications, funding, and prizes.

At interview, the following will also be assessed:

- the candidate's understanding of the project, including details and limitations of the experimental approach, project risks, and impact on the field; *and*
- the candidate's career stage, motivation, and plans to develop as a clinical academic in the short and long-term e.g. awareness of training needs and plans to address them.

Supervisors must also confirm that:

- they can provide the space, equipment, and resources necessary for the fellow to successfully complete the PhD; *and*
- appropriate ethical approval is in place for the project (if applicable).

How will we handle your application?

This is a joint partnership between Imperial and the ICR, therefore the joint operations team will receive and process your application for the Clinical Academic Training sub-committee to review. By applying to this scheme, you agree that your information will be seen by individuals within the operations teams and Clinical Academic Training sub-committee.

Enquiries

Enquiries regarding these applications to the programme can be sent to admissions@icr.ac.uk. Queries about the Convergence Science programme and its themes should go to icr-imperial-convergence.centre@imperial.ac.uk