

Continuing the CRUK MB-PhD journey: from 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. They will start the PhD component of the MB-PhD on 1st October, resulting in their PhD end date being automatically set to 30th September on eProg. However, since the MB-PhD programme expects students to submit their thesis prior to their MBChB return date, they must submit this by mid-August, allowing induction back into the MBChB programme.

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 medical school assessment period. Students should recognise that the timing of the viva is frequently determined by availabilities of the examiners.

MCRC confirms hospitals bases with the medical school and the programmes will 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.

Conversations around corrections should be had early so that students can strike an appropriate balance between the MB-PhD and MBChB programmes. 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, ie early submission:

- The Lead Supervisor and student co-produce an outline of a proposed submission date, considering quality of project, student preparedness, and quality of submission.
- The MCRC MB-PhD team reviews and queries any concerns with the Lead Supervisor and student, and suggests and agrees amendments.
- The MBChB Programme Director is informed of the proposed submission date where appropriate.

The MCRC endorses submission, taking into account the below:

- MCRC's position – supervisors should notify intention to submit early as soon as 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, per other projects.
- MBChB programme position – submission before the student re-starts their MBChB programme will support the student's successful reintroduction to their medical studies.

Contact with MCRC and CRUK post-submission

MCRC provides continued support and training where possible, to ensure that the intercalated PhD pathway becomes a viable career mechanism, and is support into, and beyond, the medical degree.

Role of the supervisor

The Lead Supervisor identifies an appropriate contact for the student post-submission to serve as a mentor after the student successfully passes the viva examination. This is usually the Lead Supervisor themselves but could be another nominated person if the Lead Supervisor ceases to have tenure.

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 their MBChB. This may 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 MCRC Training and Education team

The MCRC Training and Education team continues to support CRUK-funded MB-PhD students, once they are back in their undergraduate degree and into their early careers. We:

- give them 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. 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 (re)induction sessions, including promoting options to continue their research interests as part of their clinical training (such as electives, PEP and support in applying for foundation training/SFP)
- working alongside placement teams so that students are placed in appropriate 'blocks' around their viva, so there is minimal disruption to the MD
- support 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.

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 their undergraduate medical tuition fees at the UK/home fee rate per MB-PhD student (£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 may 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 this bursary at the UK/home fee rate only, regardless of method in which they have obtained UG fee funding. The bursary will be paid post-PhD and the MCRC Training Office will work with each student ahead of their return to UG medicine to agree an appropriate method of reimbursement in advance.

An MB-PhD student will be rendered ineligible for undergraduate tuition fee reimbursement if:

- exiting the PhD programme
- failing to return to medical school following thesis submission on 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 of undergraduate tuition 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 these themselves anticipating later reimbursement if accepted onto the MB-PhD programme. We can make partial payments for international MB-PhD students' UG tuition fees, recognising that the bursary from CRUK only supports the UK/home fee rate.

We can make reimbursement 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 years. Details of this will be agreed between the MCRC Training Office and students, recognising their different financial situations.

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 is paying this to UoM on their behalf (e.g. the student does not need a new tuition fee loan). 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](#) to SLC available at 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	Confirmation of returning students and year planning with hospital bases
	Mid-August	Submission of project
	Late August	Induction into year 3 or 4 of MBChB
	Early September onwards	Return to medical studies and placements
	August-November	Preparation for viva
	Late November-early December	Viva and start of corrections – medical school informed of outcome, with resulting processes as appropriate
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.
	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
		MBChB/student
		MCRC/ MBChB/Local Foundation School (if placed in the North West)

Appendix B – Example of timeline dates

Friday 18 th August 2023	PhD submission date for MB-PhD students
Start of academic year 3 or 4 2023	Year 3/4 induction dates
Friday 8 th December 2023 (no later than)	Final date for MB-PhD Viva

Version control

Version	Date	Amendments made (if applicable)
1	23.03.02	N/A
2	24.02.20	eProg end date added; addition of Post PhD-undergraduate tuition fee bursary; research expectations.