

Admissions Policy and Procedure

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This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the [Academic Regulations](#).

Data Protection

Please see the [student and alumni privacy notice](#) regarding information held about students and alumni.

1. Policy Statement

1.1. The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) is committed to providing high quality postgraduate education. In line with its equal opportunities statement, the ICR welcomes applications from suitably qualified applicants, irrespective of their race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, political belief or affiliation, socio-economic group, family or carer responsibilities, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability. The ICR values the diversity of its students and is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. All applicants will be treated fairly, equitably and efficiently, with respect and courtesy, aiming to ensure that the applicant experience is positive, irrespective of the outcome.

1.2. Decisions about offering a place on a degree programme are made on the basis of:

- i. existing or predicted qualifications and grades (individual projects may require a qualification in a specific subject area);
- ii. references (academic or clinical as appropriate);
- iii. information provided via the application form;
- iv. performance at interview (where applicable);
- v. for research degrees, the suitability of the candidate's academic/research experience to the projects available.

1.3. The ICR considers each application on its individual merit and disabled applicants are considered using the same admissions criteria as all other applicants. The ICR is keen to address the issues which, whether real or perceived, may deter a disabled applicant from applying for a place on our degree programmes and, to this end, the ICR provides support services for prospective and existing students.

1.4. The ICR's Academic Regulations set out the general criteria for degree admission. Additional admissions requirements for individual programmes are indicated in the relevant section of this document.

1.5. Where interviews are part of the selection process, this is indicated in the relevant procedure below. In all cases, both shortlisting and interviews should be conducted by members of staff who have received equality and recruitment training (including avoiding implicit bias).

1.6. Individual degree programmes will have specific selection criteria, which will be previously agreed and consistently applied throughout the selection process. Interview questions will be related to these criteria. Assessment forms for each candidate and notes on the final appointment should be kept for all interviews, recording the outcome and the reasoning, as they relate to the relevant selection criteria.

1.7. Applicants should apply during the admissions cycle for which they seek entry onto the programme as the ICR does not accept applications requesting deferred entry.

1.8. An applicant may, however, request to defer the place to a later date once an offer of admission has been made. The arrangements for specific programmes are detailed in the relevant sections below.

1.9. Successful applicants will receive an unconditional or conditional offer of a place. Conditional offers may be issued based on future examination performance, and in these circumstances any conditions will need to be met with evidence provided prior to the registration date.

1.10. All applicants will be informed of the date by which they will need to make a formal response by either accepting or declining the offer they have received.

1.11. Confirmation of a place will be provided on receipt of the acceptance of an offer, or on receipt of evidence that any conditions have been met if the offer is conditional.

1.12. After accepting an offer, applicants have a statutory right to cancel their acceptance within 14 calendar days, starting from the day after notification of acceptance is received. It is not necessary to provide a reason for cancelling. Applicants who wish to cancel after 14 calendar days should contact admissions@icr.ac.uk for advice.

1.13. Any applicant wishing to make an appeal or complaint about the admissions policy and procedure should refer to the  [Complaints procedure for applicants.pdf](#).

2 . Overseas Applicants

2.1. Applicants whose first language is not English must be able to demonstrate a proficiency in English to the equivalent of IELTS score of 7.0, with a minimum of 6 in any one component. Online IELTS test results are not usually accepted. IELTS scores will be verified using the IELTS Results Service.

2.2. Students without a valid IELTS score should have either education experience in English (minimum 1 year) or work experience (minimum 18 months), in a [majority English speaking country](#) within the last two years.

2.3. It may be possible to make a conditional offer to applicants who do not meet the conditions outlined in 2.1 & 2.2, subject to further study and re-examination.

2.4. All successful applicants requiring a visa will need to meet the relevant UKVI criteria.

2.5. The ICR website provides details of eligibility criteria for specific doctoral programmes. Overseas applicants may not be eligible to apply for programmes due to restrictions placed by the funder (e.g. Research Councils). However, all ICR-funded studentships are open to applicants irrespective of nationality, subject to meeting the minimum admissions criteria.

Admissions Procedures for Research Degree Programmes

Students are normally expected to study full-time for research degrees, due to the nature of lab-based academic research. However, in specific circumstances, such as being an existing member of ICR staff or maintaining a measure of clinical work, – or where a student's personal circumstances make part-time study more appropriate – it is possible to register part-time at the discretion of the primary supervisor and Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences). However, owing to the fast pace of our research, this may not be feasible for some projects. In such situations, a minimum of 40% (or the equivalent of 4 clinical sessions) of normal work time must be available to contribute to the thesis for the degree programme to be deemed viable. This assumes that the student will contribute an additional effort equivalent to 10% FTE in their own time.

3. Admissions Procedure: Non-clinical PhD Students

3.1. The recruitment process will normally commence in September/October and should include, where possible, all funded studentships.

3.2. Potential projects must be vetted according to the ICR's procedure for approval of studentships outlined in the MPhil/PhD Code of Practice. In considering proposals and awarding studentships, a variety of factors will be considered, including supervisory arrangements and alignment with the ICR research strategy.

3.3. Studentships will normally be advertised in October as part of the ICR's annual recruitment process. The advertising must be approved by the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences) or their representative. Studentships are normally advertised in the scientific press, relevant websites, and the ICR's website. All applications must be submitted online by the advertised deadline. Complete applications will be initially screened against the general criteria for admission in the [ICR's Academic Regulations](#), and against 2.1-2.2 above, to ensure applicants meet or are likely to be able to meet the required minimum standards. All applications are then made available via a web-interface to the Dean's Team and supervisors of the projects who will rank the applications based on 1.2: i – iii and v above.

3.4. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a recruitment event in January / February. Where this is held in person the ICR will normally pay reasonable travel expenditure but not first-class travel. Claiming for international flights must be pre-authorised by Registry.

3.5. Applicants are initially interviewed, normally by at least two prospective supervisors and an independent panel chair. If successful at this stage, applicants are invited to one-to-one interview(s) with one or more individual project supervisors.

3.6. Before any offer is made, the supervisors, panel chairs and Dean's Team will meet to agree all offers. Successful applicants will then receive an informal offer via email, which will remain subject to contract.

3.7. When an applicant has confirmed their acceptance of the informal offer, a formal written offer will be issued. The offer letter will state the terms and conditions that need to be met. Registration will be subject to medical clearance and, where appropriate, proof of the award of a degree with the required classification.

3.8. If an applicant would like to request that their offer is deferred they must submit a request in writing to the Registry including the reason for the deferral and the length of time requested. All such applications are considered by the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences) and the primary supervisor, and are usually only approved in exceptional circumstances. Decisions on deferral requests are normally provided to the applicant within 10 working days.

3.9. Should an applicant decline the offer, an offer may be made to a reserve applicant. If there is no reserve applicant, the project may be re-advertised, subject to approval by the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences). Interviews for candidates not already seen as part of the main round should follow the format described below (in point 3.10.).

3.10. It is expected that the majority of students will be recruited via the ICR recruitment event. However, in addition to 3.9 above, supervisors are usually allowed to advertise studentships outside of the event (subject to approval by the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences)) if a Division or team receives funding for a studentship outside of the initial advertising round. The studentship must be advertised externally and, as a minimum, on the ICR's website. All interviews must follow the format of the recruitment event as closely as possible. Any applicants invited for interview are required to be interviewed by a minimum of the project supervisor and a member of the Academic Dean's Team, with the project supervisor taking an active role in the interview. The interview should follow the format of the recruitment event as closely as possible. Where a member of the Academic Dean's Team could not be present at the interview there must be a separate acceptance interview.

3.11. Where a studentship has been agreed as part of a Faculty recruitment package, and the incoming (from outside ICR) supervisor has already identified / recruited a candidate, the procedure from 5.2-5.6 may be followed. This will only be permitted if the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences) approves a rationale from the supervisor for why the competitive process does not need to be followed. Where appropriate, this may involve a student transferring into the ICR programme part-way through, in accordance with the Academic Regulations.

3.12. If a supervisor has their own funding available that can be used for a studentship, and they have identified a specific prospective student, the procedure from 5.2-5.6 may be followed. This will only be allowable in rare instances where this is not contradicting any funder requirements, and the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences) must approve a rationale from the supervisor for why the competitive process does not need to be followed.

3.13. Existing members of staff interested in registering for a PhD should normally apply via the main event outlined above. However, in exceptional cases they may follow the process outlined below.

Registration on the MPhil/PhD programme for existing members of staff:

3.14. Applicants who are employees of The Institute of Cancer Research or the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust and who have been in post for a minimum of one calendar year may be eligible to register on the MPhil/PhD programme. Registration will not be backdated, and candidates will ideally be registered from October so that they can participate in the induction events.

3.15. Applicants must have the support of their supervisor and have discussed and agreed a project and a work timetable before registration.

3.16. Applicants must recognise that the work for which they are primarily employed takes precedence over their studies for MPhil or PhD. It is likely that some of this work will provide material for the thesis, but it must be accepted that there may be a change of direction of research within a Division, or even redeployment to another Division.

3.17. Candidates should complete the ICR's application form and project proposal form including approval by their Head of Division, who will confirm: the candidate's suitability for MPhil / PhD registration, that the facilities required are available, that the proposed study will not compromise the service delivery of the Division or Team, and that the project is feasible and [meets the requirements of the MPhil / PhD degree](#). The Head of Division must also guarantee a specified amount of study time for the applicant, agreed with the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences).

3.18. The supervisor must complete the supervisor form. Once all forms are complete and signed they should be returned to the Registry with:

- confirmation of funding;
- copies of certificates of academic qualifications;
- evidence of ethical approval for the project if required;
- copy of passport, visa (if applicable) or National ID card (EU only).

3.19. The Registry will then arrange an acceptance interview between the applicant and a member of the Academic Dean's Team. All applications require the final approval of the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences). Once approved, applicants will need to complete the ICR student registration form.

3.20. Students who are also members of staff will normally have their registration automatically terminated if they leave ICR employment unless they have completed their experimental work and have only to write up.

4 Admissions Procedure: Clinical Fellows (Clinical PhD Students) - centrally administered programmes

4.1. Details of centrally administered Clinical PhD programmes are published on the ICR website, including guidance for applicants. Candidates considering applying are strongly encouraged to read the guidance available, which gives more detail on the timelines and advice for applicants.

4.2. Following a call for expressions of interest from potential supervisors over the summer, the recruitment process will usually commence in September / October with the advertising of available

project areas / supervisors in the medical press, relevant websites and mailing lists, and the ICR's website.

4.3. Applicants are invited to contact supervisors directly with a CV, the names and email addresses of two referees and a brief covering letter indicating that they would be interested in jointly developing a project and applying for an ICR-administered fellowship.

4.4. Supervisors will select one candidate and invite them to develop a project together. They will then submit a joint application, by completing a Clinical Research Training Fellowship application form and a Supervisor Form. The deadline for applications is usually in December.

4.5. Shortlisted applicants will be asked to attend a panel interview, usually held in February. There are usually 6-8 panel members present at the interview, including a member of the Academic Dean's Team and an external panel member wherever possible. Candidates are normally asked to give a short presentation and answer questions from the panel related to agreed assessment criteria.

4.6. The panel makes a recommendation on offers which must be approved by Executive Board.

4.7. Successful candidates will receive an informal offer which will be followed up with a formal offer and employment contract, including relevant terms and conditions.

4.8. In the event that any fellowships remain unfilled, the above process will be repeated.

4.9. Successful candidates would normally be expected to register in the October following their interview. However, there can be flexibility based on clinical training needs. Any candidate wishing to defer their start date, or start earlier should discuss it with their supervisor and the Registry.

5. Admissions Procedure: MD(Res) and Clinical PhD Students - ad hoc recruitment

5.1. MD(Res) students and some clinical PhD students may be recruited outside of a central recruitment process. Usually this occurs when a trainee doctor at The Royal Marsden works with a senior consultant on a research project appropriate for a research degree and has funding for the duration of the degree programme. Alternatively a clinician may secure a competitive external fellowship to register for a degree. The procedure for such registrations is as follows:

5.2. Applicants are required to complete the ICR's Application Form and a project proposal form which should be discussed with their supervisor and approved by their Head of Division prior to commencing their period of study. The Head of Division must confirm willingness to host the student for the required length of time, that the project meets the requirements of the [MD\(Res\) or MPhil/PhD degree](#), that the work is feasible within the timeframe and that appropriate resources are available for the duration of the project.

5.3. The supervisor must complete the supervisor form. Once all forms are complete and signed they should be returned to the Registry with:

- written confirmation from the relevant ICR Head of Division/RM Department Head confirming that there is full funding in place for a minimum of two years (MD(Res)), or three years (clinical PhD);
- copies of certificates of academic qualifications;
- evidence of ethical approval for the project if required;
- copy of passport, visa (if applicable) or National ID card (EU only).

5.4. The Registry will then arrange a preliminary meeting/acceptance interview between the applicant and a member of the Academic Dean's Team within a maximum of four weeks from receipt of the fully completed paperwork receiving initial sign off from the appropriate Deputy Dean. All applications require the final approval of the Deputy Dean (Clinical Sciences) for MD(Res) applications or the Deputy Dean (Biomedical Sciences) for MPhil/PhD applications.

5.5. Once approved, applicants will need to complete the ICR student registration form. Note that registration cannot be backdated.

5.6. Any student starting outside of the main intake will be expected to attend an alternative induction event.

Taught Postgraduate Programmes

Admissions procedures for individual programmes are described below:

6. Admissions Procedure: MSc in Oncology

6.1. Applications must be made via the Application for Admission (Taught Programmes) form, available on the ICR website. Applications may be made at any time. However, there will be a date notified on the ICR website, and given to enquirers, by which time no further applications will be considered for entry at the next given intake.

6.2. All applications will be considered in the first instance by a Course Director to verify that the applicant meets the admissions criteria.

6.3. Applicants will be offered a place if they meet the admissions requirements and are in a recognised clinical training programme for which this programme is required as part of their training (subject to any conditions e.g. English language ability). Applicants who do not fall into this category, but who meet the admissions requirements and can still demonstrate their suitability for the course, may be invited to attend an interview, and asked to provide evidence of a work-based education facilitator / mentor, prior to a decision being made.

6.4. Course Directors reserve the right to make the final decision on course entry. If there are more applications than places available, priority will be given to doctors in medical and clinical oncology training posts, as this course forms part of their clinical training.

6.5. Any applicant in receipt of an offer of admission who wishes to withdraw before enrolment on the course must notify the Registry in writing of their intention to do so.

6.6. Any applicant wishing to request that their offer is deferred must submit a request in writing to the Course Directors including the reason for the deferral and the length of time requested. Any request for deferral is considered by the Course Directors on its merits, which will include the likelihood of space being available on the programme's next starting date and the reasonableness of the request.