



What to do before you start your PhD

what support is available, first things you should do in your new role

First of all.....Congratulate yourself! You're coming to Imperial College London to do a PhD – Well done! Here are a few tips for things you should do and think about in the early days of your fellowship.

Key people

- * Arrange to meet your academic supervisor in the first week you start.
- * Meet the current PhD research fellows/students in the lab/research group and ask them for their advice especially around who to approach to learn key skills.
- * Get to know the Section Manager/ Admin team in your Department.

Administration

- * Make sure you know and have confirmed the funding for your PhD fellowship, and understand what this includes (in terms of research costs) and how you can arrange research consumables etc. The Section Manager in your research area will be able to help with this.
- * Get your employment contract sorted as quickly as you can with Imperial College London. This is usually organised by the Section Manager in your Department, who will liaise with the Imperial HR staff hub.
- * Once you have your contract you need to register with Imperial College as a PhD student, using the [online application form](#). Read the instructions clearly and apply under 'Section C: members of Imperial College staff'.

- * Send a copy of your contract (by email) to your Departmental Research Degrees Manager. This will ensure that you are registered correctly i.e. your employment contract is required to ensure that you are registered as a staff/student with full time registration and full-time milestones. If your employment contract is extended at any point, please email the contract extension to your Departmental Research Degrees Manager to ensure that your research degree registration continues seamlessly.

- * Take your original degree certificates (MBBS and also Royal College Membership) to Imperial College Registry, 3rd floor, Sherfield Building, South Kensington campus. Your research degree registration is conditional upon showing your original degree certificates to Registry. This is boring but critical. The College won't accept "I've already shown these to the Deanery/NHSE" !

- * Sort out an Honorary contract with the relevant NHS clinical department if needed: this is usually done through the Clinical Director of your department, and will usually be at ICHT if this is where you need a clinical contract. It will require further paperwork. Your academic supervisor will know who to contact or failing that, your clinical Training Lead.

PhD Programme Milestones

Make sure you know your targets for submission - especially your Early-stage assessment which is undertaken 9 months after starting, with a Late-stage review by 24 months – further details will be in your Departmental Research Degrees Handbook.



Training and Development

* Be sure to attend Induction and Orientation events organised within your Department and Section.

* Arrange to meet the clinical Training Programme Director in your specialty so they are aware of your presence and can be aware of any clinical training needs you may have (you should be undertaking minimal clinical duties during your PhD). Ensure you have completed all e-portfolio issues related to your last year in clinical training eg curriculum coverage, educational supervisors reports etc, so you do not have to deal with this in the months to come.

* You **MUST** undertake ALL the NHS Trust defined mandatory training (core skills) available through LEARN on the ICHT intranet, and keep these up-to-date (or appropriate ones at the RBHT/C&W).

* Read the [Graduate School web pages](#) to learn about the professional development opportunities freely available to you and the mandatory requirements: especially the Doctoral programme pages. The Graduate School's Professional Development attendance requirement exists to ensure that all students receive some professional development training while at the College. The CATO web pages also have lots of useful information.

* **Laboratory skills:** The Imperial Faculty of Medicine runs a two-week intensive programme on Mastering Lab skills giving an opportunity to train in essential molecular and cellular biology laboratory techniques. The programme has two parts – pre-course online preparation and 2-week intensive laboratory sessions. The course usually runs during August and September. Visit the [FoM website](#) for details.

* Attend as many CATO events as you can – details will be circulated via the Research Degrees Managers in each Department. CATO activities are provided to support your development as a clinical academic and include Research Symposiums, Masterclasses, Careers events and Newsletters.

Useful Resources:

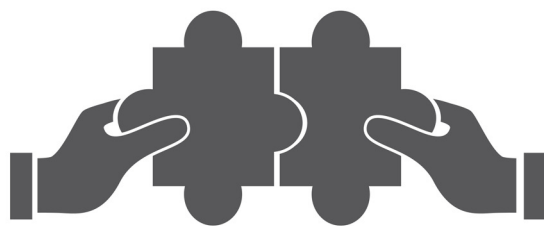
[Mutual Expectations document](#) - a suggested starter list of expectations that research students and their main supervisor might expect from each other.

[Student Support Zone](#) - a summary of all the support available to students at Imperial College.

Further details on the CATO website:

Events: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/medicine/study/clinical-academic-training-office/news-and-events/>

Information: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/medicine/study/clinical-academic-training-office/phd-programmes/support-for-clinical-phd-fellows/>



Support and Information

* Make sure you are familiar with the guidance and requirements laid out in your Departmental Research Degrees Handbook.

* The Graduate School's [Doctoral Student Coaching programme](#) provides an opportunity to talk independently from your academic department, about challenges you may be experiencing.

* Healthcare Professionals (nurses, midwives, AHPs, clinical scientists, pharmacists) should consider applying to the [AHSC's Mentoring for Research programme](#), which is available to support PhD fellows.

* Whilst the majority of research degree fellow supervisor partnerships work extremely well, there may be occasions where fellows and/or their supervisors are unhappy with their partnership. This can be for a variety of reasons, but quite often it is mis-communication or misinterpretation of intention between the fellow and supervisor which leads to partnership difficulties. The Graduate School with Student Services and the College's accredited Mediators has a confidential pilot [Research Degree Mediation service](#), designed for use where other services and support have not worked yet and with a view to pre-empting a breakdown of the relationship.

Notes:

- this guidance has been prepared with Doctors in mind, however most of the principles would also apply to all Healthcare Professionals undertaking PhDs: come and talk to the CATO team for specific questions.
- Clinical staff based in the Imperial College AHSC but not registered for PhDs at Imperial College London should seek guidance from the equivalent departments at the HEI where they are registered.
- AHSC staff registered at other HEIs are welcome to use services provided by the CATO team, but are not eligible to use other Imperial College services such as the [Early Career Researcher Institute \(ECRI\)](#).