

Manchester BRC 2022 PhD Programme Guidance Document

This document outlines the recruitment process of PhD studentships across the BRC. This is an open competition that allows for the best students to be allocated the studentships based on suitable projects that are developed from across the BRC themes and core infrastructure.

Background: To-date we have in total 41 PhD theme studentships (funded through BRC themes) and a further 8 studentships that will be considered core and will be funded through BRC central monies. The theme studentships have been written into individual themes to develop their specific research, whereas the core PhD studentships will be developed across themes/clusters and against a set of additional criteria (outlined in call).

PhD Recruitment Timeframes: We propose that when possible the BRC PhD studentships will start in September – with the first cohort starting in September 2023, and further PhD studentships from September each year. In order for PhD students to finish within the five-year funding window, the BRC will need to recruit in the first two years (2023 and 2024). Other entry points throughout the year are January and April, but these are often less well recruited to, and students who are recruited at these entry points often miss training and other activities that are usually hosted in September.

PhDs will be recruited to these timeframes in the majority of circumstances; however, we do appreciate in some cases when this will not be possible. We will work with you to consider how to do this, and take into consideration what is expected in terms of the recruitment process.

The proposed timelines for 2023 start are shown below have been considered with the Doctoral Academy, and fit within their activity profile, and aligns with other calls across the Faculty.

Call for BRC project Proposals	October 2022
Deadline for submission of BRC Project Proposals	25 November 2022
Deadline for projects to be reviewed by Doctoral Academy/BRC	2 December 2022
Project advertised	9 December 2022
Application closing date	20 January 2023
Doctoral Academy to process applications	20 January – 3 February
Supervisors to nominate candidates	10 February 2023
Formal panel interviews	w/c 6 March 2023
Offers confirmed	w/c 13 March 2023 (this will allow ATAS/Visa for international candidates and clinical notice if required)

PhD process:

There will four stages to recruit PhDs studentships following the steps of other Doctoral Training Programmes hosted by the Faculty:

- Project call where all studentships will be submitted to the Doctoral Academy (DA) - **admissions.doctoralacademy@manchester.ac.uk**
- Advertisement of PhD projects via appropriate websites (including findaPhd.com including appropriate wording about BRC and logo)
- Student nomination by supervisors for interview by a BRC independent panel

- Student recruitment, registration through the DA

Note: There are some cases when this process will not be followed, for example in areas where there is a shortage of skills, or a specific clinical skill set is required, or a clinical fellow will be registered to do a PhD following recruitment to post. In these instances, we would expect you to follow the overarching principles and guidance in this document, and bring the clinical fellow, plus the project to be reviewed by the BRC panel

Step 1: Project Call and Submission

All PhD projects will be submitted to the Doctoral Academy. For those funded by Core BRC funds, this will be a call across the BRC with themes and areas guided by Cluster/Theme Leads. The required form follows other Faculty guidelines and will be submitted the Doctoral Academy.

Project Suitability and Principles

All PhDs will be checked by the BRC Education/Training Lead, the Doctoral Academy and Associate Dean for PGR ensuring consistency across the BRC and that they meet the objectives of the BRC.

For those from within themes we would like to consider also the range of people supervising the themes (for example, an opportunity for an earlier career researcher to join the supervisory team.)

Step 2: BRC Project Advertising

All projects will be advertised together on the BRC website and wider networks. A BRC advert for all PhD recruitment will be placed in findaPhD.com, jobs.ac.uk and local institution mailing lists. The BRC Core team will circulate this across relevant central mailing lists, supported by themes-circulation across subject-specific mailing lists and adverts.

For all adverts for BRC studentships, inclusion of some wording (suggested below), plus the logo is expected.

PhD wording for BRC in advertisements

The following wording (or a close variation) should be included in all BRC PhD studentship advertisements as well as the NIHR and BRC logo (attached).

The National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) funds Biomedical Research Centres (BRCs) as experimental medicine centres of excellence via competitive application every five years. Manchester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) has recently been renewed over five years to provide experimental medicine infrastructure funding across Greater Manchester, Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Contracted by the NIHR, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) host the BRC in partnership with the University of Manchester and also with The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust, Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Manchester BRC drives forward experimental medicine across a range of research themes which are grouped into four clusters: Inflammation, Cancer, High Burden Under Researched Conditions and Disease Complexity as areas where the region has demonstrable strength and which will work collaboratively to improve patient outcomes and embed, build and accelerate personalised health and care for all.

Training and Capacity building will be embedded across the themes of the BRC, such that it will become integral into the way we work and develop careers. We will build a strong cohort of PhD students across the BRC developing transferable skills alongside their scientific research projects. There will be opportunity to connect to the growing BRC community that reaches across sectors.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Principles: Manchester BRC is committed to attracting and recruiting underrepresented groups as an essential step to building a more equal, diverse and inclusive research culture. The NIHR have also emphasised the importance of EDI throughout its funding and strategies demonstrating a shift to more accountability in relation to inclusion. Between 2017-2022 an EDI review was conducted by Rebecca Riley in collaboration with the Doctoral Academy to produce a series of recommendations that we could follow to be more inclusive. At each stage of the process we will:

1. Consider the reach of where projects are advertised, increasing this through exploring alternative marketing alternatives
2. Ensure diversity of supervisors and interview panel members
3. Implement an inclusive shortlisting and interview process – following guidance from Faculty.
4. Capture, evaluate and report admissions data via the Doctoral Academy to inform actions for continuous improvement and to focus on the funding of future training opportunities either at postgraduate or before to target specific groups
5. Complete Unconscious Bias and Diversity in The Workplace University training for panel members
6. Make a clear specification of entry requirements, key criteria, and guidance / support available to applicants in recruitment adverts, together with acknowledgement of the BRCs value and commitment to diversity and inclusion
7. Include a BRC EDI statement on all project adverts
8. Focus on prior attainment rather than potential
9. A more inclusive approach for students to present on a research area of their interest
10. Provide clear feedback to unsuccessful interviewees
11. Review applications to identify unmet needs, groups who are not proceeding and why

Step 3: Candidate Application Process

Applications are invited from individuals looking to develop a career in experimental medicine research relating to one of the themes. The application process will be student focussed, recruiting the best candidates across the project pool. The supervisor will play an important role at each stage of the application process.

1. *Candidate Application*
Candidates would apply to a project title by contacting the named supervisor first.
2. *Potential supervisors will nominate candidates (give them permission) to apply*
Candidate details suitable for interview will be sent to the Doctoral Academy. Please note: more one than one candidate can be nominated per project.
3. *Candidates apply to UoM via normal procedure*
4. *Assessment by supervisor and Education Lead (Professor Georgina Moulton)*
Supervisor will discuss candidates put forward for interview with the Education Lead. If more than one candidate has been put forward for interview, then supervisors will be able to assess at the next stage which they think is more suitable for the project.
5. *Candidate Interview*

- Suitable candidates will be invited to a panel interview (format to follow Faculty guidance, will be circulated at later date)
- At interview, the supervisor will be able to assess whether a candidate is still suitable for project
- The candidate will be also assessed against all other candidates who have applied for all projects by the independent panel, especially in the case of more projects than funding available.
- If a project has more than one suitable candidate, the supervisor will have the opportunity to re-assess their candidates at interview.
- The independent assessment of candidates will then determine the outcome of the offers, in particular, when considering more projects than funding available (e.g., for core PhD studentships).
- If no suitable candidates are found for the project, we will work with the project supervisory team/theme to re-advertise and repeat the process.

Interview Panel Composition

The interview panel will comprise at least four persons, each fulfilling a different role:

1. BRC Exec - Deputy Director/PGT Director- TBC
2. BRC Education Lead – Professor George Moulton
3. Independent member (not a recipient of a PhD project) Associate Dean for PGR
4. Project supervisor

The first three roles will form part of the independent panel and will be involved in all PhD interviews.

Step 4: Student registration through Doctoral Academy

Students will be fully registered through the Doctoral Academy after acceptance of PhD offer.