

University of Manchester MRC Doctoral Training Programme Programme Handbook 2021-22



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This handbook contains information specific to the MRC DTP. For general information on PhD study, please refer to your Faculty handbook.

DTP students are registered for their PhD in Schools across the two Faculties of the University that form part of the MRC DTP (FBMH and FSE). You will be registered in the School/Faculty where your main supervisor is based. During your PhD, it is likely that you will receive other information or instructions provided by your registering School. This may be confusing to begin with, but if you are unsure about anything please do not hesitate to ask!

Introduction

I'm delighted to welcome you all to the the University of Manchester (UoM) and to the Medical Research Council (MRC) Doctoral Training Programme (DTP).

This programme was established in 2016 as a partnership between the MRC and the UoM to provide excellence in doctoral training in the biological, medical and health sciences. You are joining the programme as part of the 5th cohort, forming part of a larger community of MRC-funded students, who support one another through the various events organised by the MRC DTP student committee.

Aligning with the MRC's strategic commitment to basic science and its translation, our DTP is focused on three themes, which are found in all our leading research activities: 'Understanding mechanisms of disease', 'Early detection and diagnosis' and 'Development and implementation of therapeutic interventions'. For our iCASE students, the key themes are: 'Precision Medicine', 'Harnessing Health Data', and 'Materials and Medicine'. Our supervisors are drawn from across the Schools in the Faculties of Biology, Medicine and Health (FBMH) and Science and Engineering (FSE), facilitating collaborations between scientists, clinicians, engineers and industry to develop innovative technology for patient benefit and to allow students to gain the experience and knowledge of complementary disciplines needed to excel as part of a cross-cutting research team in their future careers.

You will also have access to world-class infrastructure (e.g., 'omics, informatics, imaging, trials methodology) and a broad range of training opportunities to support your research. A core programme of training in Patient and Public Engagement and Involvement, Entrepreneurship, and Leadership has been designed specifically for our MRC DTP students, which will run alongside training in both priority research skills (e.g. quantitative methods and in vivo analysis) and transferrable skills. This approach ensures that you will have the opportunity to generate quality research data, that will contribute to outputs of significant impact, and to acquire the skillset needed to apply your bio-medical training to your preferred career pathway whatever that may be.

You will be aware that the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic has impacted universities considerably. Please be assured that we are working to ensure the delivery of the range of skills and experience required by the DTP programme, whilst operating under the guidelines introduced by the university to minimise the spread of infection. This situation is subject to change, and I recommend that you consult the university's Covid-19 FAQs [here](#) regularly for up-to-date information. We aim to provide as much as possible of our training online, not only to safeguard against disruption, but also to facilitate access for all students.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy the challenges of the DTP programme and it will be a rewarding experience throughout. The aim of the Manchester DTP is to **'support researchers to become leaders who, in all walks of life, will question, lead and motivate'** and by the time you graduate, you should be well on your way to becoming one of these leaders!

Dr Anna Woollams
Director, MRC DTP Management Board
September 2021

1. DTP Management Board

The DTP Management Board, under the directorship of Anna Woollams monitors the effectiveness of the Manchester DTP and liaises with MRC for continued development of the programme. The DTP board, which meets every three months, is responsible for assuring the quality of students recruited to the programme, the provision of appropriate skills training and the development of cohort building activities. Membership of the DTP board includes the Faculty Associate Deans for Postgraduate Research, the FBMH School Postgraduate Research Directors, the DTP Cohort Lead, the DTP student rep and academic and administrative staff with responsibility for recruitment, skills training and business engagement. The DTP Management Board operates under the governance of the [University of Manchester Doctoral College](#).

The MRC monitors the Manchester DTP programme via an annual report submitted in August and a mid-term review of the DTP. Representatives of MRC will meet with members of the Management Board each year and occasionally request to meet with students. The MRC values your feedback (as does the University; see Section 2 below) to help inform programme development.

2. Student Committee

The MRC DTP has a student committee which leads on events run for all MRC students. They help to organise the DTP Conference, as well as running social events, the Keynote Speaker series and the internal seminar series. The committee is led by the MRC DTP Student Representative, who also sits on the DTP Management Board, to ensure student views are represented at the Board. All MRC DTP students are welcome at the student committee.

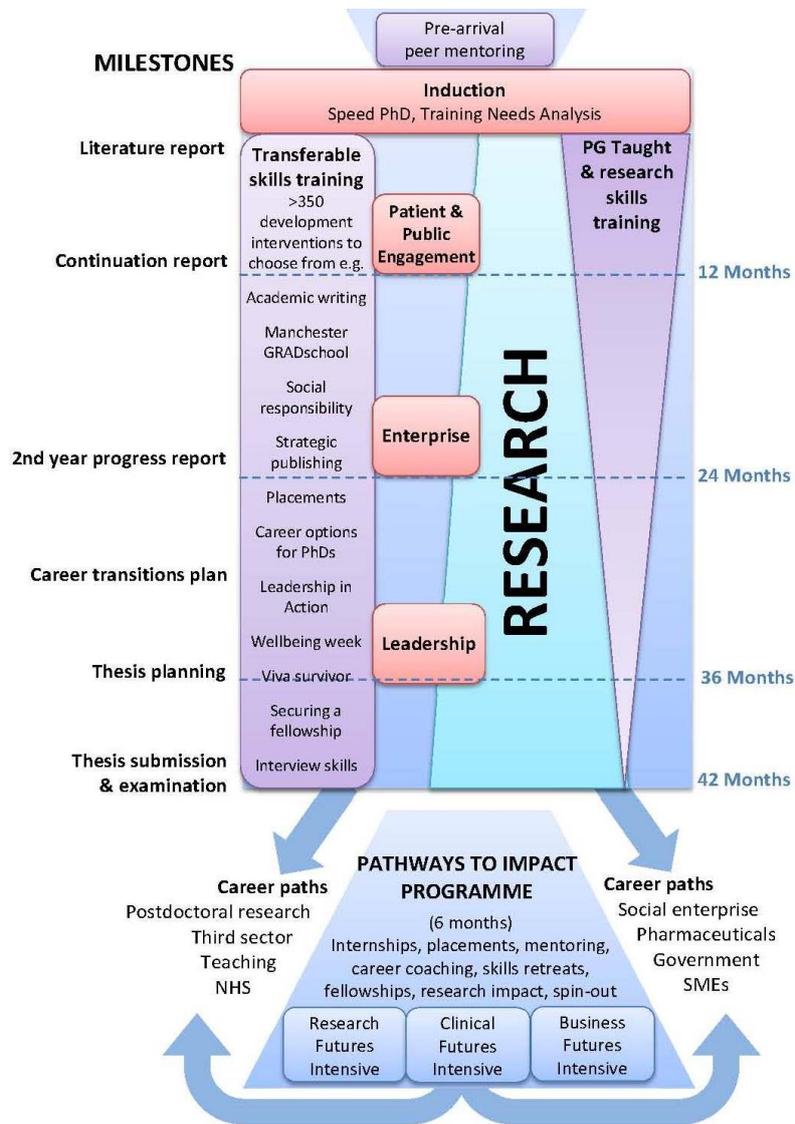
Details of the DTP student representatives for 2021-22 are below should you wish to contact them.

Name	Email
Jade Talbot	Jade.talbot@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk
Ioana-Emilia Mosneag	ioana-emilia.mosneag@manchester.ac.uk

3. Programme Structure and Training

The DTP programme is 3.5 years (see Figure) in duration and students are expected to study on a full-time basis.

You will be required to undertake a range of transferable and research specific skills training and will undergo a training needs assessment when you meet with your supervisors at the beginning of each year. Some of the skills training will be DTP specific, whilst others will be arranged via your registering School/Faculty. Communication about specific DTP training will be sent to you at the relevant time. It is expected that all UKRI students complete at least 10 days training per year.



MRC DTP Programme Structure 1

The first two training sessions you will attend are the ‘Doctoral Academy Induction’ and ‘Life as a PGR’ which will cover induction, health and safety, academic literacy, plagiarism, bioethics and other key generic skills. Alongside this generic training, you will also receive bespoke training as a cohort on Public Engagement and Patient Involvement, which may be offered online/ face to face, further details to be provided closer to the time.

Key progression milestones in your first year are the submission of the Literature Review in January and the Continuation Report in July. The Continuation Report is assessed by a viva and determines whether you will successfully progress into year 2 of your PhD.

Years 2 to 3 will be predominantly research focused but there is a continued complementary programme of training specifically tailored for DTP students, which has the added benefit of keeping you in touch with your DTP cohort. In your 2nd year you will receive training around Business Engagement and in your 3rd year you will receive training on Leadership. The DTP holds an annual symposium, where you will present a poster in your 2nd year and a talk in your 3rd year. We also run a residential workshop, during the autumn, for students in their second year, and hope we will be in a position to do this for 2021-2022.

Your final 6 months will focus on thesis preparation and submission, and preparation for employment, whether your interests lie inside or outside of academia. You will have the option of registering for a further 6 months submission pending after the 3.5 years, to allow you to complete your writing up. Please note however that this additional 6 months is not funded. You will be eligible to apply for the Pathways to Impact Scheme for an addition six months of stipend to support your career progression after you submit your thesis Further details on this are available below (section 5).

Throughout your PhD, you will have almost unlimited access to a huge range of professional and transferable skills training and development courses, offered across the University; which can be tailored to your needs, in addition to the training you will receive as part of the DTP. You can find a full list of training courses available on the training catalogue here:

<https://app.manchester.ac.uk/training/default.aspx>

4. Progression Monitoring

Progression monitoring for all research students in the University of Manchester is via the **eProg** system: www.eprog.manchester.ac.uk. Your eProg pathway will clearly indicate the milestones relevant to your programme and how annual assessment of your individual skills and training needs is linked to your professional and personal development. It is essential that you and your supervisor engage with eProg and complete the succession of compulsory milestones by the dates indicated to ensure successful progression through the DTP programme.

Progression will be monitored within your registering School/Faculty but an overview of your academic progress will be closely monitored by the DTP Cohort Lead and the DTP Officer.

5. Pathways to Impact

Pathways to Impact is a unique opportunity for MRC DTP students, to help them bridge the gap between PhD study and entering employment. This could include time to develop a start-up, carry out further research to prepare for a fellowship application or to complete a professional placement. This is a competitive scheme, with places available for approximately a third of your DTP cohort. In order to be eligible for this scheme, you must submit your thesis by the end of your 4 year programme.

Towards the end of your programme, you will have a meeting (career transitions plan) to discuss whether this programme is something you would like to apply for and what you might do with this additional time and funding. You will need to develop a very clear plan of what you intend to do with this 6 months and how this will help you transition into your chosen career path.

Successful applicants will be given a further 6 months stipend to help support their bridging activity, whatever this may be. They will also be supported with training courses and mentoring opportunities to make sure they get the most out of this 6 months.

6. DTP Cohort Lead

The DTP Cohort Lead is in addition to your supervisory team, advisor and the academic and local support networks available in your registering School/Faculty. The DTP Cohort Lead will stay with

you throughout your PhD, acting as a cross-Faculty link to help support your academic progression, personal development and career aspirations.

The DTP cohort Lead is [Dr Kevin Couper](#)

7. Buddy Scheme and Doctoral Academy Graduate Society

The MRC DTP runs a buddy scheme for new-starters and you should have all been linked up with a 'buddy'. Being part of a mentoring relationship can help you get through some of the challenges of starting a PhD smoothly. They can help you find your feet when you start, and provide support beyond this. We also hope that you will become involved in being a buddy and offering peer support for the next intake of DTP students. The benefit of your experience is always invaluable to new students trying to find their way!

Alongside the connections you will make within the DTP, there are also many other PGR student groups you can join and get involved with. The [Doctoral Academy Graduate Society](#) organises events and PGR student networks in the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health, while the Faculty of Science and Engineering coordinate activity through the [FSE Research Development Team](#).

8. Student Support

As a DTP student, who to approach if you need advice or someone to talk to in confidence can be confusing. If you are experiencing health or personal problems that are affecting your PhD, it is advisable to speak to your supervisor, the DTP Cohort Lead or the DTP Officer in the first instance.

Students experiencing health problems or exceptional mitigating circumstances are able to request an interruption to their studies. This is normally done via your school administrator but the DTP Officer will also need to be aware of any changes to your circumstances. It is important that you raise any issues promptly, so that we can do everything possible to support you.

Details of FSE school administrators can be found [here](#)

Details of FBMH school administrators can be found [here](#)

9. DTP Conference

The annual DTP conference takes place in spring/summer, and often involved MRC DTP students from other Universities. This is an opportunity for students to showcase their work and develop important presentation, networking and communication skills. Participation in the symposium is compulsory; first year students are only expected to attend, second years will present a poster and third year students will present a talk about their research. The student-led organising committee will gain valuable transferable skills in the organisation and running of the symposium, as well as the benefits of gaining experience in chairing the oral sessions. Participation on the conference is compulsory. The conference will include an online component for 2021-2022.

10. DTP Administration

For administration purposes only, you will be registered in the School/Faculty of your main PhD supervisor, even if your other supervisors are based in different Schools. To ensure cohesion and a sense of belonging to the wider DTP community, you will progress through your PhD as a single cohort, with DTP milestones and cohort training in common.

The DTP administration team is based in the FBMH Doctoral Academy. If you have any questions about any aspect of your DTP programme, please contact DoctoralAcademy@manchester.ac.uk or iqra.habib@manchester.ac.uk

11. Finance

Finance Officer for MRC Students – Izzy Cooper izzy.cooper@manchester.ac.uk

For general Finance Queries – finance.doctoralacademy@manchester.ac.uk

The value of your award will have been confirmed in your funding offer letter. As with any other studentship, continued stipend payments are dependent on satisfactory attendance and progression and completion of all compulsory DTP milestones. Failure to comply may result in your stipend payments being withheld or stopped.

12. Research Training Costs (RTSG)

Your main supervisor will receive an annual allocation of funding towards your research and training support (RTSG) which is intended to cover lab consumables, research facilities, printing and reprographics, fieldwork (if appropriate) and conferences. You should speak to your supervisor regarding the processes for ordering items against your RTSG. *Note: The Research Councils do not normally permit the purchase of PCs, laptops or equipment using RTSG. Please contact the Doctoral Academy office or Finance Team if you require further advice.*

13. Attendance, Holidays & Absence Monitoring

It is a requirement of the University that attendance is monitored for all students via eProg. Your supervisor will be prompted on a monthly basis to complete an Attendance Form on eProg to confirm that you are engaging with your project.

Holidays

You are entitled to 8 weeks of holiday per year, the timing of which should be agreed with your supervisor in advance.

Unauthorised Absence

With the exception of agreed holidays, students are not permitted to be absent from their studies without the knowledge or prior agreement of their supervisor. Unauthorised absence will be treated very seriously. **Action may be taken to cancel studentship or bursary payments, without notice, if absences of more than two weeks are not supported by a sick note or a written letter explaining your absence.** The University will seek to reclaim any overpayment made to any student where the student has been deemed to have received payments that they are not entitled to.

Absence due to Sickness

You must notify your supervisor as soon as possible if you are absent between one and seven days due to ill-health. Thereafter a 'Fitness to Work' note or other medical note outlining your inability to work should be obtained from your GP, the counselling service or a hospital consultant. Failure to submit a medical certificate or other appropriate documentation to explain your absence may result in loss of any claim that special circumstances be taken into consideration when academic performance or progression is assessed.

For long-term absence, all UKRI-funded students are entitled to up to 13-weeks paid sickness absence leave per year, which will require a formal interruption. Please contact the DTP Programmes Officer of Doctoral Academy for further information about this.

Any change to your registered status or circumstances must immediately be notified to the DTP Officer either via your DTP cohort lead, your supervisor or via your School administrator. Failure to comply may result in your stipend payments being withheld or stopped without prior notice.

14. Reporting to MRC

Please note that The University is obliged to provide personal information to Research Councils UK on students selected for MRC studentships, together with information about their studies. Each year we submit data to the MRC via the JeS shared service reporting system and via an annual report. This mandatory information is crucial to enable MRC to demonstrate how it is investing in healthcare research training for the UK. Please notify your DTP Officer of any changes relating to your PhD or personal circumstances to ensure the relevant Research Council is notified promptly.

15. Research Fish

The Research Councils have a responsibility to demonstrate the value and impact of research and training supported via public funds and as such they are required to provide information on the outputs, outcomes and impact of the research they fund to government and public bodies. You are responsible for providing this information via Researchfish, the online system the UK Research Councils use to collect all researcher outputs. This exercise is also very important to the University as our returns have an influence on the levels of funding we receive from the Research Councils to support PhD training.

You will receive details about engaging with Researchfish in the second year of your PhD and you will be required to enter and submit data every year from your third year until three years beyond your studentship period. Therefore you should make sure that your contact details are kept up to date on Researchfish for this purpose at <https://www.researchfish.com/>.

16. Your Data

The terms and conditions of UKRI training grants awarded from 1st February 2015 place a responsibility on universities to provide information about students, supervisors and research projects. The Research Councils will use this information for monitoring purposes and policy studies in relation to their involvement with provision of postgraduate training. The data will be made

available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, including Gateway to Research (<https://gtr.ukri.org/>), and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

17. Data Management

The Research Councils take data management and sharing very seriously – you are therefore recommended to refer to the University Research Data Management Policy. This governs data management and sharing for all our research activity:

<https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/using-the-library/staff/research/research-data-management/policies/>

Research Data Management is part of good research practice and will help you complete your research efficiently. Before the start of your research project you must complete a [Data Management Plan](#) in [DMPonline](#). Training on Research Data Management is available in person and online via [My Research Essentials](#). There is more information on the [Research Data Management website](#) or you can send any questions to researchdata@manchester.ac.uk.

18. Communication

The DTP Officer will send you any important updates or events that you need to be aware of, so please make sure you read these emails carefully. Alongside this you will receive communication from your School and Faculty administrators and it is worthwhile familiarising yourself with their contact details early on.

Please note: We will only ever use your assigned University email address - please ensure that you access and read your University emails on a regular basis.

19. Acknowledging MRC Financial Support

It is important that you acknowledge financial support received from the MRC on any publications, posters or other written communications arising from your work. Your DTP studentship grant reference number is:

DTP Entry – **MR/N013751/1**

CASE Entry – **MR/R015767/1**

20. Terms and Conditions of MRC Studentships

Your DTP studentship is governed by the Terms and Conditions of UKRI Training Grants, with delegated responsibility for administration and setting/adherence of policy to the award holding Research Organisation. For further details, please see: <https://www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training/>

21. University Regulations and Policy

The University ordinances and regulations, policies and codes of practice governing all postgraduate research students can be found at: <https://www.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/pgr-handbook/policies/policies-and-regulations/code-of-practice/>

It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the University regulations and policies which govern your research degree. At the first meeting with your supervisor, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understand these documents. You are specifically advised to familiarise yourself with the [Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

A student will abide under the University ordinances and regulations, which applied at the time of entry to their programme of study; however, changes to University and local School/Faculty or programme policy and guidance will apply with immediate effect.