Guidelines for graduate students in the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research and the Departments of Haematology and Medical Genetics

Welcome to the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research (CIMR). The following notes are intended to provide you with the general organisation and annual assessment framework for your graduate studies.

About CIMR

The CIMR is a cross-departmental institute, within the University of Cambridge Clinical School, that is housed in the Wellcome Trust/MRC Building on the Addenbrooke's hospital site of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

It provides a unique interface between basic and clinical science that underpins its high level objective of determining and understanding the molecular mechanisms of disease. Currently, CIMR comprises approximately 230 scientists and about 70 graduate students. They are organised into around 24 research groups each led by a Principal Investigator (PI) who, along with their group members, is also a member of one of six home University departments (Medicine, Pathology, Medical Genetics, Clinical Biochemistry, Haematology or Clinical Neurosciences).

CIMR Graduate Education Committee

The CIMR Graduate Education Committee oversees all matters relating to graduate students in the CIMR and the Departments of Haematology and Medical Genetics. This includes the admissions process, progress reports, examinations and reviews. The committee comprises of representatives from each of the departments within CIMR and one student representative.

Graduate School of Life Sciences

The Graduate School of Life Sciences (GSLS) looks after the educational and career needs of graduate students and early career researchers in the Faculties of Biology, Clinical Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and their affiliated institutes. You will find a huge amount of useful information on their website about courses, lectures and university requirements (http://www.gradschl.lifesci.cam.ac.uk).

Core Skills Training Programme

The Core Skills Training Programme (CSTP), provided by the GSLS, is a group of activities that you are strongly recommended to complete in your first year. It has been designed to get you started in planning your Researcher Development (RD) and provides you with training in the areas of personal effectiveness and communication. To learn more about CSTP you should review the course requirements and activity descriptions on the CSTP Moodle site onto which all new students will have been enrolled automatically.

Supervision

Each student will have a primary supervisor and a second supervisor (sometimes called an ‘adviser’ or ‘mentor’). Your primary supervisor guides you in the choice of research project, in
defining aims and strategies, and in acquiring the skills you need for your project and to prepare you for your future career. Your second supervisor will be a member of academic staff from a collaborating or otherwise related group (outside of your immediate research group, but usually within the University). The role of the second supervisor is to complement the primary supervisor, being available when the primary supervisor is absent or providing expert advice on specific scientific areas of the research project, and to mentor and help in case of individual difficulties. The second supervisor will also lead your yearly assessments. Your second supervisor should be selected during the admissions process.

Information for MPhil Students

Students registered for the MPhil in Medical Science, will be required to submit a thesis of not more than 20,000 words. You must submit your dissertation for examination within the maximum period of your study. For full-time students this is 12 months from the initial date of registration (taking into account any periods of authorised intermission). Students who do not submit by this date will be removed from the University’s register of students. Students who are unable to meet their submission deadline must apply to extend their registration date.

The examination will also include an oral examination on the thesis and general field of knowledge within which it falls. The oral examination will be conducted by an external examiner and an internal examiner.

The GSLS website provides additional information about the rules and regulations regarding submission, examination and transferring to PhD (http://www.gradschl.lifesci.cam.ac.uk/CurrentStudents/Lifecycles/MPhilResearch).

Information for 4 Year PhD Programme Students

Students registered on a 4 year PhD programme based in CIMR will undertake, and be examined for, an MRes in Medical Science during the first year of the programme. Assessment for the MRes is based on a ‘portfolio format’, which includes:

- Submission of reports and other outputs of the lab rotations;
- Assessment of these and feedback given at the time;
- A PhD proposal/mock grant application;
- An oral examination on the collected output (‘portfolio’) with at least two examiners

After successful completion of the MRes, and recommendation to progress, students will continue to the PhD element of the programme. Please see the information below for PhD students.

Information for PhD Students

First Year Assessment

Students are not formally registered for the PhD until the end of the first year. The recommendation to approve students for formal registration is made on the basis of the first year assessment. This assessment considers the preparation of a report at the end of the first year and a viva defending the report (including a 10 minute presentation at the start of the viva).

First Year Report

The first year report should be between 30-50 pages (50 being the absolute maximum). You should be allocated approx. 2 weeks protected time to complete the report. The report should consist of:
i. a short abstract
ii. introduction, a review of the relevant literature
iii. results section, a description of your experimental work (methods, results)
iv. discussion, as appropriate to the results obtained
v. experimental plan for the second year
vi. references

Copies of your report are required for both examiners, plus one for your primary supervisor.

First Year Viva

You will be required to defend your first year report in September. The viva will be conducted by your second supervisor and an external assessor (this will be someone external to your project but within the University). Your primary supervisor may also be invited to attend as an observer. You will be required to give a 10 minute presentation based on your first year report at the start of the viva. The viva assessors will then submit a report with their recommendation of whether you can be formally registered for the PhD to the CIMR Graduate Education Committee (phdadmin@cimr.cam.ac.uk).

Presentation of Work

All students will be expected to present their projects at either the CIMR Internal Seminar Series, the CIMR Research Retreat, departmental seminar series, or programme symposia. These talks should be given by the end of your second year.

Second Year Assessment

You will formally meet with your second supervisor to discuss your progress and plans for your final year. This should take place at the end of your second year, usually in September. Both supervisors should confirm that your progress is satisfactory, or communicate any difficulties to the CIMR Graduate Education Committee. You will also be expected to present a poster at the annual CIMR/MBU 2nd Year Poster Session.

PhD Submission

You must submit your dissertation for examination within the maximum period of your study. For full-time students this is 48 months from the initial date of registration (taking into account any periods of authorised intermission). Students who do not submit by this date will be removed from the University’s register of students. Students who are unable to meet their submission deadline must apply to extend their registration date. The GSLS website provides detailed information about the rules and regulations regarding submission and examination (http://www.gradschl.lifesci.cam.ac.uk/Current Students/Lifecycles/PhD - section-13).

Support

If you are experiencing difficulty with any aspect of your work or outside life as a graduate student, there are several sources of support. You may wish to speak with either of your supervisors in the first instance, your college tutor, members of the CIMR student committee or with members of the CIMR Graduate Education Committee. Alternatively, you may wish to contact one of the University’s welfare offices, details of which can be found at http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/students/gateway/welfare/ and http://www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/
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