

Clinical Academic Pathways

My Journey through Research, Training & Translation

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ICAT Programme: Structured Clinical Academic Training



Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) Programme

Protected time for PhD during specialist training + Funding + Mentorship network

What It Offers

- PhD funding
- Protected research time
- Clinical training integration
- Mentorship & networking

Who Can Apply

- Doctors in training
- Open to Veterinary, Dentistry etc
- Strong research interest

Why It Matters

- Builds research skills, collaboration
- No career interruption
- Academic credibility
- Pipeline to academic consultant posts

What Made This Possible?

Mentorship

- **Make sure to reach out to people- opportunities come up!**
- Strong supervisors in clinical & research domains
- Regular guidance on career decisions
- Network introductions & collaboration opportunities

Protected Time

- ICAT provides structured research time
- Balance clinical training with PhD work
- Institutional support from University & Hospital
- Clear expectations on both sides

Funding Opportunities

- ICAT fellowship covers consumables spending etc
- Commercialisation funding (ARC Hub)
- Multiple pathways available

Collaborative Mindset

- Interdisciplinary partnerships essential
- International collaborations expand scope
- Team science accelerates progress
- Learn from engineers, data scientists, clinicians

Challenges & Skills Gained

Real Challenges

- Time management: Balancing clinical & research
- Maintaining clinical skills during PhD
- Learning new domains (animal work, engineering, stats, IP)
- Funding competition & grant writing
- Imposter syndrome is real

Skills Developed

- Grant writing & securing funding
- Project management & leadership
- Collaboration across disciplines
- Translational thinking (bench-to-bedside)
- Commercialisation & IP awareness
- Teaching & mentoring
- **Failure happens! Learn from it**

Practical Advice

1

Start Early

Build research experience during training — audits, quality improvement, case reports

2

Find Mentors

Identify clinical academics you admire. Ask questions. Most are eager to help. Try to plug yourself into a larger research team

3

Network Actively

Attend conferences, join societies. Present at conferences. Connections open doors

4

Develop a Research Question

What frustrates/interests you clinically? Follow your curiosity

5

Learn Core Skills

Statistics, critical appraisal, grant writing — invest in these early

6

Be Patient

Academic careers are marathons. Small consistent steps compound over time. There are multiple ways of doing it.

Opportunities & Resources

Funding Programmes

- ICAT Fellowship (PhD during training)
- HRB & Wellcome Trust grants
- Royal College research awards
- Industry partnerships & ARC Hubs
- Local grants

Training & Development

- MSc/PhD programmes (structured)
- Research methodology courses
- Society summer schools (BIHS, ESH)
- Clinical trial governance training

Why Now is a Great Time

- Funding for clinical research
- Greater push towards quality improvement, research-based policy
- Multidisciplinary research increasingly valued

Key Takeaways

- Clinical academic pathways are accessible and structured
- Research training improves your clinical practice — the skills transfer both ways
- Mentorship and collaboration are critical — you cannot do this alone
- Start with curiosity, build methodically, and stay persistent
- Multiple entry points exist depending on career stage and specialty
- The best time to start is now — protected training opportunities are available

Clinical research needs YOU — your questions, your perspective, your drive to improve care

Getting Started: Practical First Steps

You don't need a PhD to start building research skills. Here are immediate opportunities:

Short Courses & Training

- RCPI Research Skills Course
- HRB Research Methodology Courses
- Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP)
- Good Clinical Practice (GCP) certification
- Local QI training programmes
- Statistics for clinicians (online/evening)
- Grant writing workshops
- Get involved in a Society

Accessible Grants & Research Opportunities

- Hospital Innovation Grants
- RCPI awards
- Consultant research spending allocation
- Quality Improvement initiatives (local)
- Case reports & case series
- Audit & service evaluation projects
- Departmental research support funds
- Evidence for Policy grants (HRB)

BIOINNOVATE
NEEDS DRIVEN OPPORTUNITY



Start small: A successful audit or QI project today builds the track record for larger grants tomorrow

Thank You

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