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## Academic Track for Internship: Information for Academic Supervisors

### 1. What is the academic track for internship?

Launched in July 2017, the academic track is a recent initiative for internship in Ireland. It is a national comprehensive programme based between the six Irish Medical Schools and their partner teaching hospitals and is intended to complement the Wellcome - HRB Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) Programme. At its core it is a 1-year academic internship programme providing supported and mentored academic and clinical training targeted at the inception of graduate practice and within the context of acquiring full registration. The broad aims of the programme are:

- To provide an opportunity for doctors at the beginning of their clinical careers to develop or continue to develop research, teaching and leadership skills
- To promote scientific discovery and sustained academic development
- To retain medical talent

Interns on the academic track will have protected time within the working week to pursue a project of their choosing with the support of an academic supervisor. Their protected time will take place during one three-month rotation and will be disposed as 2.5 to 3 days per week, no more than 36 days in total. The remainder of the week will be spent in clinical work, there will also be an on call commitment.

### 2. What is required of an intern on the academic track?

Interns on the academic track will be required to achieve the same clinical competencies as all other interns, and will be required to complete the same mandatory elements of intern training. In addition, they will have academic goals to fulfil. Interns on the academic track can choose to participate in a project in one of the following areas:

- Clinical research
- Medical education
- Healthcare leadership and management



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Outcomes for the academic placement will be agreed upon with the academic supervisor at the beginning of the placement. Conditional places on the academic track will be offered in March 2023 (conditional because the final med exams/IEET must still be passed), and from that point onwards, successful candidates will be encouraged to contact their supervisor and begin planning for the project. The project must be something which is practical and achievable within the short time frame available to interns and bearing in mind they will have training and clinical commitments as well. Suggested outcomes for interns on the academic track could include:

### Clinical Research

Identify a research question

Draft a research proposal

Apply for ethical approval

Conduct or participate in a study/experiment (a lab-based study, a study that uses patient/human volunteers or a population-based study)

Write up a study/experiment for publication

Present findings at a local/national/international meeting

### Medical Education

Develop a new course or module in the undergraduate or postgraduate medical curriculum

Develop and use an assessment programme to test knowledge, skills and attitudes

Complete a piece of medical education research

Deliver bedside tutorials and lectures to undergraduate medical students

Participate in Problem Based Learning tutorials

### Healthcare Leadership and Management

Identify an area for quality or safety improvement in the hospital environment

Produce a plan for improving quality or safety and engage with key stakeholders including staff members and patient representatives if appropriate

Evaluate the effectiveness of the project and develop recommendations for the future to further improve patient care

Present and disseminate learning from the improvement project



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An intern on the academic track may achieve some or all of the above suggested competencies for their project, other additional competencies might be agreed upon depending on the nature of the project.

### 3. What is required of the academic supervisor?

As an academic supervisor for an intern on the academic track, you will be asked to mentor and support the intern in their proposed project. The intern should meet with you prior to starting work in July and discuss their project. You should agree on competencies to be achieved at this stage.

The intern's academic rotation may take place from July to October, October to January, January to April or April to July. Therefore, you would need to be available at the time the intern is undertaking the academic part of their rotation. You will be contacted by the candidate in March with an invitation to take on the role of academic supervisor and you will be informed of the timing of the intern's rotation at this stage, prior to your accepting the role.

We would ask that during the academic rotation, you meet regularly with the intern, check their progress, and offer advice and support. It is likely that, given the short time frame, most interns will be keen to progress their project outside of their three-month academic rotation and will need to do so outside of working hours. They may require support and guidance during this time also, which could be provided via email or phone communication, depending on the nature of the project.

The work of the academic interns is showcased at an annual national event. As their supervisor, your intern would appreciate your support in attending this event.

### 4. I would like to take on the role of academic supervisor, what should I do next?

Once the academic track posts have been allocated (March), the candidates will contact potential supervisors and invite them to take on the role. Who the supervisors are will depend on the projects proposed by the successful candidates, as they will need a supervisor with expertise in their area of interest. You will be provided with details of the intern's rotations and when their academic rotation will take place. If you are available and are happy to take on the role, the intern will be assigned to you. From then on it is up to the intern to contact you to meet with, discuss and



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agree upon a project proposal and outcomes for the academic rotation.

*Please note that academic track posts are fixed, and taking on an academic intern does not include any clinical work on the part of the intern.*

5. I have already been approached by a final year medical student asking me to be their supervisor. How should I respond?

If you have been approached by a student about the academic track already, and you would consider taking the role of the academic supervisor for this student, you can discuss potential projects with them. You may wish to offer your advice on developing a draft research proposal. However, the student may not be successful in their application for the academic track, or if they are offered a place, it may not be in your university network and therefore it might not be practical for you to be their supervisor. It is also worth bearing in mind the limited time an academic track intern will have to complete their project (no more than 36 days), so any proposed projects should be achievable within this short timeframe.

6. How are Academic Track Internship Posts allocated?

If an applicant is shortlisted by the academic track recruitment team, they will be contacted by them and invited to attend for an interview. If they are successful at interview, they will be ranked in order of merit based on several factors, including:

- Whether they are a CAO entry student / non-CAO entry student to Medical School, as this will affect the order in which their application is considered in this allocation process;
- Whether they are an EEA / non-EEA national and require a work permit to work in Ireland, as this will affect the order in which their application is considered in this allocation process;
- If allocated to an academic track intern post, successful completion of all necessary pre-employment checks by the individual employer;
- The number of Academic Track intern posts available.

In practice, this means that applicants for Academic Track intern posts who accepted a place in an Irish medical school through a CAO offer will be allocated to Academic Track intern posts ahead of



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applicants who accepted an Irish medical school place directly from the medical school, and applicants who will not require a permit to work in Ireland will be allocated to posts ahead of applicants who will require a permit to work in Ireland.

If successful, applicants will receive a **conditional offer of an Academic Track intern post**. This offer is dependent on their eligibility after Stage 2 of the HSE National Recruitment Service intern application process and passing Final Year exams. Once they have accepted an Academic Track Intern post, they will not be offered another intern post. If they are unsuccessful or decline the offer of an Academic Track intern post, they will remain in the Intern match process conducted by National Recruitment Service.

Finally, we are delighted to say that the academic track has been a very successful programme, the calibre of academic interns was outstanding, and many have achieved international awards and publications. It is fair to say that supervising these exceptional junior doctors at their earliest career stages would be a highly rewarding experience.

**Thank you for your interest in the Academic Track for Internship**

If you have any further queries, please contact Dr Elaine Burke, Research Fellow, Trinity College Dublin at [burkee11@tcd.ie](mailto:burkee11@tcd.ie).