



National Institute for Health Research

RESEARCH TRAINING & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The vision of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research.

This document sets out how the NIHR's programmes for research training and career development are contributing to this vision.

Overview

The purpose of the NIHR's programmes for research training and career development is to create the next generation of researchers focused on people-based research. The programmes provide support for the academic training paths of all health care professionals and other key disciplines involved in health and social care research.

Aim

The NIHR Faculty research training and career development programmes aim to:

- Attract, develop and retain the best new researchers to conduct and support people-based research.
- Focus the talents of these trainees on health research that meets the current and future needs of patients and the public.
- Develop and sustain training routes for research skills to support the development of future leaders across all professions and disciplines.
- Build and support a skilled workforce capable of advancing high quality research with the aim of maintaining and improving health within a knowledge-based, patient-centred health service.

Benefits

The training and career development programmes offer the following benefits to trainees:

- An opportunity to pursue a stimulating career.
- Enabling clinicians to combine research training with their professional training.
- Opportunities to attend meetings and workshops.

- Access to support, such as mentoring and career advice and, in the case of more advanced trainees, consideration for leadership development.
- Membership of the NIHR Faculty, a vibrant community of outstanding individuals exchanging ideas about research and innovation.

The programmes also offer benefits to employers by leading to better quality healthcare and better health outcomes, delivered by a more highly trained, motivated workforce.

Eligibility

NIHR research training and career development programmes cover a wide career range of targeted awards, including internships, masters, doctoral, postdoctoral and senior fellowships, and research professorships. Some programmes are open to all healthcare professionals and relevant academic disciplines. Other programmes are specifically designed to provide steps on a career path for particular healthcare professionals.

Specifically targeted programmes include the NIHR *Integrated Academic Training Scheme* for doctors and dentists (see below); the NIHR *Clinical Academic Training Pathway* for nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals and fellowships for healthcare scientists. Further details are given below.

All programmes have explicit eligibility criteria.

NIHR Trainees

NIHR Trainees include:

- Those individuals whose salary is supported through NIHR training schemes awarded in national competition, whether 'open' or targeted to specific professions.
- NIHR-funded PhD students based mainly in NIHR Biomedical Research Centres (BRCs), Biomedical Research Units (BRUs) and Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs).
- Trainees supported through approved training programmes offered by NIHR Schools.

NIHR Fellowship Programme

NIHR Fellowships are open to any individuals working within the NIHR's remit of people and patient-based research who show potential to be career researchers. These awards are not restricted to one particular professional grouping, clinical or non-clinical.

Four levels of fellowship are offered, covering four career stages from PhD training through to establishment as an independent researcher:

- NIHR Doctoral Research Fellowships
- NIHR Post Doctoral Fellowships
- NIHR Career Development Fellowships
- NIHR Senior Fellowships

These awards can be held part time to enable fellows to combine research training with developing clinical skills, or looking after dependents.

NIHR Research Professorships

NIHR Research Professorships are selected competitively from institutional nominations. The awards support emerging research leaders in the early part of their career who have shown the ability to promote effective translation of research from 'bench to bedside' or from 'campus to clinic'. These individuals are likely to become the senior leaders of translational research of the future. Award holders continue to spend time providing service or, if not clinicians, collaborating with service, in order to maintain the link between research and patients.

NIHR Integrated Academic Training Programme

This programme was introduced in response to the Walport report¹. This report recommended the implementation of an integrated academic training scheme for junior doctors to enable them to combine academic and professional training.

Two main schemes make up of this NIHR-funded pathway: Academic Clinical Fellows (ACFs) and Clinical Lectureships (CLs). Funding is provided for some 250 ACFs and 100 CLs for doctors and a small number of additional posts for dentists, to be awarded each year. An ACF provides a protected period of predoctoral research training (25% WTE) with the remaining time spent undertaking specialty training. Fellows prepare themselves for a subsequent period of PhD training that may be funded by NIHR or other major research funders. A CL is an early postdoctoral award that splits time equally between research and clinical training.

The NIHR Clinician Scientist Fellowship scheme is a later stage of the pathway, and is designed to support the development of research-led clinical academics with potential to become leaders in their field, and who have obtained their certificate of completion of professional training (CCT).

The NIHR also funds In-Practice Academic Fellowships for fully qualified general practitioners (GPs) and dental GPs with only limited research experience, but who can demonstrate potential as future clinical academics.

Capacity Building for Non-Medical Health Professions

The Finch Report² made recommendations regarding the implementation of a clear career pathway for nurses involved in clinical research. This pathway has been broadened to encompass midwives and allied health professionals, and is supported by a number of awards from Masters studentships through to Senior Clinical Lectureships. The awards have been carefully designed to enable fellows to acquire research expertise while continuing to develop their clinical skills. Another partnership, with the Chief Scientific Officer, has developed Research Fellowships aimed at helping healthcare scientists to improve patient services and treatment through the development of research skills. The Senior Clinical Lectureships referred

¹ Medically- and dentally-qualified academic staff: Recommendations for training the researchers and educators of the future. Report of the Academic Careers Sub-Committee of Modernising Medical Careers and the UK Clinical Research Collaboration March 2005.

² Developing the best research professionals. Report of the Nurses in Clinical Research (Workforce) Sub-Committee of the UK Clinical Research Collaboration August 2007.

to above are also open to healthcare scientists. The schemes attract funds from a variety of sources, and are managed by NIHR.

NIHR Research Methodology Programme

The NIHR is supporting applied research methods through funding internships and fellowships, with the aim of building capacity and capability in applied research methods. The NIHR is funding a series of Masters studentships in medical statistics and in the economics of health.

NIHR-funded PhDs

There are also NIHR-funded PhD students based mainly in NIHR BRCs, BRUs, and CLAHRCs. The Department of Health is developing networks of training leads in these NIHR-supported infrastructure centres. Selected NIHR-funded PhD students in BRCs and BRUs have participated in experimental medicine training events.

Support for NIHR Trainees

Support for NIHR Trainees includes an annual meeting normally held in the autumn. More focused events, such as training camps or discussion fora, have been run or are being planned for groups of NIHR Trainees.

There is a mentoring programme, funded by the NIHR, and delivered by the Academy of Medical Sciences for doctors and dentists receiving training on the Integrated Academic Training pathway. Mentoring support is also available for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals on the Clinical Academic Training pathway.

A leadership development programme has been established for NIHR trainees who are making a significant contribution to their field and who are beginning to take on significant leadership and management roles (details on the [NIHR website](#)).

NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre

The NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre (NIHR TCC) manages the programmes for recruitment and support of NIHR fellowships and NIHR integrated academic training schemes.

Further information

Further details about the NIHR research capacity development programmes are available on the NIHR TCC website at www.nihrtcc.nhs.uk.

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