

Fellowship programme webinar Q&A

Q. Can the panel shed more light on the weighting applied to the following assessment of the applicant at the shortlisting stage?

- o Previous research experience or formal training (e.g Masters)
- o Relevance of previous research experience
- o Output from previous research experience
- o Evidence of commitment to a research career
- o Evidence of potential as a career researcher

A. The panel will consider each of these aspects as important as the rest, although expectations of each will obviously vary depending on the level you are applying for. For example at DRF level the Panel are looking for future potential whereas at SRF level an outstanding publication record and evidence of grant funding is expected. All levels are assessed on the 3 broad areas of 'person', 'project' and 'place'. Think of it as a three legged stool, if one leg falls off, the stool falls and it isn't effective. Try to consider your application in this way, all aspects are as equally important and the panel will look at all of the aspects above.

Q. Some of the applicants would be experienced full time clinicians / health & social professionals without experience in writing or publishing papers. At a doctoral level (DRF), what other outputs aside from publication are acceptable for such individuals?

A. If you are making an application at the Doctoral Research Fellowship level, some examples of outputs aside from publication include dissemination of research findings to local groups such as clinicians, patients or local University, NHS Trust or Third Sector; contribution to the write up of a publication; poster presentations; clinical audit; opinion pieces in professional magazines or anything that can demonstrate your writing ability.

Q. Some of your applicants would have worked in research delivery in an operational capacity (i.e. as trial coordinators, clinical studies officers, research nurses etc.). Many of these roles do not deliver research publications for the staff involved. However, they have excellent experience in delivering research (initiating, research approvals, governance etc). How relevant are their research experiences and what is the best way for this to come across in an application?

A. Yes, any kind of involvement in research is relevant to your application, especially at Doctoral Research Fellowship level. Examples of involvement in research might include a

substantial research project at undergraduate or masters level, audit, assisting with recruitment to a research project and/or contribution to the write up of a project you were involved in. There are various places in the application form where you are given the opportunity to express your research experience. Sell yourself!

Q. If I was to apply for a research fellowship to do my PhD can I do it at any Uni i.e. Keele?

A. Yes you can. You will be required to identify a host institution who will agree to host you for the duration of your award. You should be able to demonstrate why the host is the best place for you to undertake the fellowship.

Q. Can it involve health and social care (my supervisor would be a sociologist)?

A. Yes. NIHR fellowships cover anything that is looking to improve health and health and social care. For further information about the remit of NIHR please see <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/funding/Training-Programmes/TCC-NIHR-Remit-For-Personal-Awards.pdf>.

Q. The guidance notes state that 'where appropriate applicants may look to identify training and development opportunities with relevant research networks'. Training courses and support from local research networks are only available if the project is added to the NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio. Is this what the NIHR is looking for?

A. Training and Development ranges vastly depending on the individual and the nature of the project. There are many examples of training and development, however broadly speaking this can include training in a methodology, statistical analysis, patient public involvement, or an area specific to carrying out the project you outline in your application. Previous applicants include short courses and sometimes modules towards a Masters (although the award will not usually fund you to carry out a Masters in it's entirety due to the feasibility of doing this alongside a research project and other training). You might identify training within your institution, or externally at other Universities, NHS Trusts or institutions. Think also what training you will need for the next stage in your research career. You should look to include your research on the NIHR portfolio where necessary and further information about this is supplied in the guidance notes and if you are successful.

Q. Which clinical problems is the fellowship aimed at addressing ?

A. The NIHR is interested in any applications addressing any area of relevance to the NHS and the health of the population. You need to be able to demonstrate the potential to benefit patients and the public within 5 years of completion of the research. <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/funding/Training-Programmes/TCC-NIHR-Remit-For-Personal-Awards.pdf>

Q. I'm told there is no upper limit for funding, but can you give me some idea of the amounts you have given in the past? I'm applying for a 5 year part-time/60% PDF. Is it possible to see a copy of a successful PDF grant application?

A. The total sum of funding applied for varies vastly depending on the nature of the proposed research project and the costs associated to other aspects of the application. It is not possible to share previous or current applicants applications. If you can identify somebody who is willing to share their previously successful application, this might benefit you. The RDS or your Trust/Institution's Research Office may be able to assist you in identifying previous applicants.

Q. What is the difference between the clinician scientist and Fellowships award

A. A Clinician scientist award is aimed at medics and dentists only. It is an intermediate-level fellowship so similar to a CDF in terms of academic experience of the applicant. The award also includes funding to undertake between 2 and 4 clinical sessions each week for those post CCT. Further information can be accessed here:
<http://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/clinician-scientist-awards.htm>

Q. We now need an Orchid ID number. Do we need to fully complete an orchid profile as well, e.g cvs, publication etc and will that form part of the review or do we only need to register with Orchid and have the id number.

A. Yes, just the ORCHID ID number. This will help us better understand where trainees go upon completion of a fellowship.

Q. I would be carrying out my project in a different clinical department from the one I am currently employed in, within the same Trust. Who should act as Head of Department signatory – the current head or the one I would be working with during the Fellowship?

A. The Head of Department who you will be working with or the location you will be carrying out the research.

Q. Does the 20% of time that can be spent on clinical work apply to all healthcare professionals, or just medics? I am a clinical scientist. If I plan to spend 1 day a week on clinical services should this be taken predominantly out of research time or formal training time?

A. It applies to all healthcare professionals applying to undertake a DRF at 100% FTE only.

Q. I am planning to collaborate with researchers from another University who have expertise in a particular part of the project. Does it matter whether I put them down as a collaborator only or also as a supervisor? If supervising, either formally or as collaborators, I would need to cost their time so they can claim the costs back – is there any barrier to doing so?

A. It is down to you to decide whether you would like the individuals you outline above to be supervisors and/or collaborators. Yes, they can be both. The award does not fund supervisor or collaborator time, please do not include costs for their time.

Q. I am currently doing a PDF and want to apply for a CDF but my local NIHR research support service have said it is really important I get some additional grants before applying for a CDF. I have focused on publications and changing services and not getting additional grants. How important is this and what amount/sum are we talking about?

A. There isn't a set amount of money but the Panel will be expecting you to moving towards independence when applying for a CDF so evidence of gaining grant funding will help demonstrate this.

Q. I'm hoping to apply for a Transitional Research Fellowship and would like clarification that the time spent in my role as a project manager and programme manager will not be counted towards the postdoctoral time restrictions.

A. Provided the posts were not undertaking research they will not be counted.

Q. At a recent event I was told into funding applications its ok to put costs in for things such as graphic design for dissemination materials. Obviously the NIHR fellowship is somewhat different to a normal research grant. Would they accept costings for something like that if you can justify it in terms of improving the impact of your work.

A. Yes, if you can justify such costs we very much encourage dissemination and appreciate this comes with costs.

Q. How do you sell yourself in the section on future plans?

A. This very much depends on the level that you are applying for as to where you will be in your career trajectory. It is important to demonstrate to the panel that you have considered your career trajectory after the award and where the award will take you in your future career.

Q. Will successful NIHR fellowship applicants have access to CRN support for their studies?

A. Yes NIHR Fellowships attract NIHR portfolio support where relevant. Please speak to your local CRN before submitting the application.
<https://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/about-crn/structure/>

Unanswered in webinar.

Q. Applying for Postdoc fellowship. How much time abroad can be included in application?

A. We usually cover 1 overseas research visit of no more than 3 months duration, but all overseas research visits should be justified within the context of your research and training and development.

Q. I am based in an HEI. Can I include in my research support team a lead clinician whom I am working with in one of the partnering Trusts? They hold an honorary contract with my HEI.

A. In your application, you can include 'Shared staff', which might include a % of time of a staff member who will be of benefit to the delivery of your research project. This is typically someone such as a statistician or a health economist, although it can be an alternative member of staff. It very much depends on the nature of their role in your project as to whether this would be funded. The awards do not fund mentor (research support) and supervisor time, if you are including the clinician in this capacity, their time will not be funded.

Q. For non-clinical applicants it only mentioned funding for research so does this mean the salary as well as the training and development funds won't be covered?

A. Each level of the Fellowships Programme provides funding for the applicant's salary, training and development and research costs for the proposed project. This applies whether you are a clinical or non-clinical applicant.

Q. How much time do you expect NIHR DRF candidates to spend in training, formal and otherwise?

A. There is no specific guidance as to the % of time a DRF applicant is expected to spend during their award in training and development, formal and otherwise. The DRF is a personal award and the training and development plan should be individually tailored to you. It is important that you consider other commitments and the demands of the PhD project and when it is ideal timing for you to attend training at different time points during the award.

Q. Can you please talk about participants' and public participation? I am applying for a PhD research. What is expected at this stage from me?

A. There are many different ways in which you can integrate Patient Public Involvement into your research project and at the dissemination stage. How you do this very much depends upon your research and how and when PPI is applicable to this. Please see the Involve website <http://www.invo.org.uk/> which will give you hints and tips and direction as to how to involve patients and the public in your research.

Q. Would applicants for the doctoral fellowships be expected to have publications?

A. It is not essential that applicants at the DRF stage have publications, however this will put you in a good position when making your application as publications will be looked upon favourably. It is all about demonstrating your potential at this level.

Q. Hello, where can I see the names of successful applicants from the previous rounds?

A. Please go to this link
<http://www.nihr.ac.uk/research/career-development-awards-funded.htm>

Can I claim childcare expenses as part of subsistence during collaborative/training research visits?

A. We don't cover childcare costs except for under the category of PPI where you can cover the costs of patients or public involved in your research.

Q. My substantive post is with the NHS, however my primary supervisor is based at the HEI where I will be completing the PhD. Is that ok to keep my NHS contract to receive 100% of funding costs?

A. The contract for the award will be with your host institution. Your host institution will be the place where you will be based and therefore the costs will be based on this e.g. if your award will be hosted by the university, the costs will be at 80% (and 100% where applicable). Your host can be NHS or HEI but you will need to make it clear why your host is the best place for you to undertake your fellowship.

Q. As I am out of time for the career development fellowship - and only eligible for the Senior Fellowship - is there an expectation that you would have held large grants prior to applying for this award?

A. You should be an independent researcher and starting to become a research leader when you apply for an SRF. We expect applicants to gain a Chair position during the course of the SRF. Evidence of grant funding is expected as part of this.

Q. How important is it to have already obtained substantial research grant funding?

A. It will depend on what level you are applying for. At DRF level it is unlikely that many applicants will have substantive grant funding except for travel grants and other prizes etc. However at more senior levels e.g. CDF and SRF evidence of gaining independent grant funding as a PI is expected.

Q. What training and support can the NIHR provide for DRF candidates?

A. The DRF award is a personal award and as such, the training and development section should be tailored to you and your development needs as a researcher in the present and into the future. The NIHR does not offer any specific training for DRF candidates as it would be too broad to cover everybody's training requirements. Training programmes should be bespoke and centred on the trainee and their needs.

Q. Could one apply for post doc fellowships even if you are not on an NIHR ACT or CL programme?

A. Yes, so long as you meet the eligibility criteria, there is no requirement to have obtained a previous NIHR award to apply for a Post Doctoral Fellowship.

Q. At the SRF level it specifically states examples of collaborative partnerships within and between HEIs and NHS in UK - does this mean running a clinical trial across more than one site, or collaborating with another site to support the project / fellowship training?

A. They are both examples you could include but anything where you have worked in collaboration with other institutions or individuals on your research should be included, where relevant.

Q. Is it possible to have a supervisor/mentor that isn't in the host institution?

A. Yes, this is fairly common, the important thing is that you have chosen the right supervisor(s) and mentor(s) for you, sometimes this person will be in the same institution as you and other times not. The panel will look to see how they will support you, especially if they are based at a different institution or NHS Trust to you as the trainee.

Q. for post doc is it possible to have european mentors/ supervisors?

A. It is possible, providing you can make it clear how the support arrangements will work e.g. use of skype for regular meetings.

Q. Regarding SRFs, the NIHR Fellowships Chair's report, 2015, highlights the expectation that the applicant will receive a Chair position before the end of their Fellowship. Whilst I can see this as a realistic aspiration for senior staff members on the teaching (academic) side, this seems to be a different matter for a (senior) post-doc. Is this always the expectation, or can you offer any ideas as to how such a chair might be secured?

A. It is the expectation. It is probably worth a conversation with your HoD before applying so you can understand their expectations; plus the HoD will need to support your application.

Q. How much notice will you have prior to interview? (when do you find out)? DRF level

A. We aim to give approximately one month's notice to candidates who have been shortlisted to the interview stage.

Q. How long will the interview last?

A. At Doctoral Research Fellowship level the interview is approximately 20 minutes with a 5 minute presentation. At Post Doctoral levels, the interview lasts approximately 25 minutes with a 5 minute presentation.

Q. Hi, I am interested in submitting a doctoral research fellowship. What is the maximum consumable allowance?

A. There is no maximum limit on the consumables allowance. However, any costs that are not justified or are deemed unrealistic, will be removed from the budget, during the contracting stage.

Q. What sort of reasons can make you turn down an application?

A. There are a wide range of reasons as to why an application may not reach the shortlisting stage or the interview stage or may be rejected for funding. Applicants are given individual feedback based on the panel's comments. Unclear applications, asking the wrong research questions, wrong choice of methodology, unrealistic research within the scope of a fellowship are just a few. Your local RDS will be able to provide more detail on this from their experience of supporting applicants. <http://www.rds.nihr.ac.uk/>

Q. Once you've added your Supervisors, can they see your application? Can they amend it?

A. When you have added your supervisors, they are able to see your application. This is so that they can agree to sign off your application. The only person who will be able to edit your application is the Head of Department, who is required to complete the support and infrastructure question.

Q. Is there an upper age limit for Fellowships?

A. No, it is all about career trajectory. Some people don't come into a research career until later in their career but can then demonstrate a steep trajectory once underway.

Q. I want to include clinical trials to re-purpose existing drugs as part of a Senior Fellowship. What elements of clinical trials are funded by NIHR under fellowship schemes?

A. The guidance notes provide information on the costs that can be included for a trial but please speak to the office if unsure.

Q. I'm a senior NHS consultant in my area, and my research output / publications are shocking compared to my University Colleagues. Will this hold me back?

A. Expectations of outputs / publications will vary depending on the level you are applying for and also your career pathway to date. If you are unsure please call the office to discuss.

Q. Would an MSc by research suffice as evidence of research interest?

A. If you are applying for a Doctoral Research Fellowship, an MSc is one way to demonstrate evidence of an interest in research. However, there are other ways that you can also demonstrate this, such as involvement in other research projects, contribution to publications and/or a role such as a Research Assistant or a Research Nurse.

Q. Is it appropriate to have multiple supervisors (eg four) if they can bring different expertise to the fellowship?

A. It is optional to have multiple supervisors but often necessary, especially if they can bring different expertise to the fellowship. It is important that you explain in your application what each supervisor will bring to your application and your development as a researcher.

Q. What are the benefits of applying for a Post Doctoral Fellowship instead of the Integrated Clinical Academic Programme Clinical Lectureship? (Differences between fellowships, funding, etc, assuming that applicant belongs to one of eligible professions)

A. Eligibility varies for each of these but it is probably worth a discussion with the office.

Q. I currently have a substantive contract with my NHS organisation where i work as a consultant nurse. Understandably my directorate would want to replace my post and cannot keep my post open until i return in 4 year (I would like to do the PhD part time). What contract do I need to agree with my NHS Trust for the duration of the fellowship? I would like to remain in the NHS as my host organisation.

A. If you would like to stay within your current host institution, the NHS Trust that you are based in will need to agree to host you for the duration of your award. The award will fund your salary costs for the duration of the time e.g 60% for four years. This means that your institution will be able to backfill your post whilst you are being funded for the duration of the award.

Q. My research project has a large qualitative component as little knowledge is known about the topic of interest. Can you advise how I can emphasise the likely impact of the research, as I may not have the same results as a quantitative project, such as a clinical trial?

A. NIHR supports high quality qualitative studies but with everything it is important that you demonstrate the impact it will make. This will vary depending on the nature of the study and research area but remember that applications will be read by a general, not specialist panel so make it clear what the impact is.

Q. when you said show any evidence of writing if no publications- does this include conference abstracts?

A. Yes this is another example of dissemination/showing your writing skills at DRF level.

Q. How much money can be allocated to training and development? Can overseas courses be funded?

A. There is no limit on the training and development budget. The important aspect is that you work up a training plan that meets your developmental needs to carry out the proposed project in your application and to develop yourself as a future researcher. Overseas courses can be included with clear justification.

Q. Are quantitative research methodologies preferred to qualitative? What is expected from a successful qualitative research?

A. Neither of the two methodologies are looked upon more favourably, it is very much dependent upon the nature of your research as to which methodology you chose that is more appropriate for your project. Mixed methods is an option as well. Your local Research Design Service will be able to help with the methodological approach to your application. <http://www.rds.nihr.ac.uk/>

Q. Can you elaborate more on research regarding biomarkers?

A. The NIHR remit statement can be viewed here: <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/funding/Training-Programmes/TCC-NIHR-Remit-For-Personal-Awards.pdf> If you have queries on this having looked at this please contact the office to discuss your individual research proposal and the fit with the remit.

Q. Dear panel. Could you comment on the appropriateness of an application on research in the field of health informatics? My intended research project would learn about the clinical, patient, and staff impact of information systems implementation - and propose large-scale systemic improvements to improve health & experience outcomes.

A. Health informatics is a field we are keen to encourage applications in but as with all applications you'll need to make the impact clear i.e. potential benefit to patients / public.

Q. When applying for the TRF, what are some of the key outcomes the panel are looking for in a successful application? Is the focus more on the training or research aspects proposed? The guidance notes state that there is no need for a research project to be included as part of the TRF so is training the key element for the application?

A. The main outcome is a successful transition of you as a researcher into someone who is competitive for further applied health research funding either through another fellowship or grant funding e.g. RfPB. Remember it is you as a researcher who is transitioning not the research.

Q. As a surgical trainee, does the NIHR give any preference towards certain research areas? I have an interest in surgical oncology and there is a relative lack of funding in this field. Does the NIHR recognise this during the selection process?

A. There is no priority given to one area over another and all applications are judged on quality. NIHR does promote certain areas through initiatives like themed calls (surgery has been a themed call in the past) but they are not given priority when comes to making funding decisions.

Q. As the environment is important, how do you perceive applicants applying for Fellowships from Universities that do not have a track record of hosting previous NIHR fellowships. Whilst their institution can ensure they put in place relevant and adequate support (e.g. mentors/supervisors at other institutions who have supervised a NIHR fellow etc) will this really be adequate?

A. Yes this is adequate, every university has to begin somewhere. It is important that the supervisors have experience of supervising PhD students and that they are the right supervisor for you.

Q. If applying for a post-doctoral fellowship, are a substantial number of peer-reviewed publications required, i.e. evidence that applicant has published throughout their PhD?

A. Peer reviewed publications are an assessment criteria. The panel do take into consideration people's different career pathways and areas when assessing this.

Q. Do you have any specific recommendations for choosing secondary supervisors for doctoral fellowships? Is it more important to have people who have a lot of time, or with specific expertise, or with a well-known reputation?

A. It is important that the supervisor has experience of supervising PhD students, has sufficient time to supervise you and meet with you on a regular basis, and has the appropriate expertise for your proposed project.

Q. If my university DPhil programme does not have a taught element, and formal training is through a range of formal courses, is there a minimum % of the fellowship time that is expected to be dedicated to training?

A. There is no minimum or maximum % of the fellowship time that is expected to be dedicated to training. The Fellowship is a personal award and the training and development section should be tailored to the individual bearing in mind the fellowship should allow you to complete a PhD in the timescale.

Q. How does the NIHR view other academic commitments alongside a postdoc fellowship, such as teaching?

A. For the time funded through the fellowship we expect you to work on the research and training and development outlined in the application. You can of course undertake the fellowship at less than 100% FTE to accommodate other academic commitments including work on other grants etc.

Q. I am due to start my PhD in January 2016. Do the NIHR fund PhDs which have already technically started?

A. Yes. Please see the guidance notes which state; "Applicants who have already begun a programme of work to achieve a research doctorate are eligible to apply as long as, by the date that they intend to take up a DRF, they have not been registered for a PhD (or MPhil with transfer to PhD) for more than 12 months WTE." Further details can be found here <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/funding/Training-Programmes/TCC-Fellowships-Guidance-Notes-2016.pdf>

Q. Does it have to just be a clinical problem - or can it be focused on, for example, improvements in terms of trauma/stress/anxiety levels in patients?

A. NIHR fellowships cover a broad range of research provided you can fulfil the remit criteria of potential benefit to patients / public / NHS within 5 years of completion of the research. Further guidance on the remit can be accessed here: <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/funding/Training-Programmes/TCC-NIHR-Remit-For-Personal-Awards.pdf>

Q. Does a supervisor need to have a medical background? Can a medical anthropologist with the right expertise be a primary supervisor for DRF?

A. No your supervisor does not need to have a medical background. Yes, it very much depends upon the nature of your research and the benefits that the Primary Supervisor can bring to your development as a researcher and your proposed research project.

Q. Can I include costs for a mentor to visit my host institution from overseas? I plan to visit them but have 2 young children so rather than spend a month with the mentor in the US, she has agreed to visit the UK to deliver some training.

A. The award doesn't include costs for mentors/supervisors/collaborators and this includes travel costs.

Q. Hello, For clinicians working less than full time, is there a time limit on applying for a PhD Fellowship after qualifying from medical school? If so does this take into account working less than full time or taking maternity leave?

A. No there is not a limit on when you can apply for a Doctoral Research Fellowship level award. You can apply at 100%, 75% or 60% working time.

Q. What are the most appropriate fellowships for someone who will have completed (or is about to complete) a NIHR Clinical Lectureship?

A. There are a number of options depending on how much research experience you have. Please call the office to discuss further.

Q. Ways of showing impact within 5 years - what's the best way of benchmarking or measuring this, other than collaborating with the right people and organisations? - A good example would be useful.

A. Impact can be difficult to measure and will vary depending on the nature of the research. For example if you are including a feasibility study in the fellowship, impact within 5 years maybe that you are completing or about to complete a full trial but you should also include the long term impact of the intervention you are trialling should the trial show the intervention is effective. Make the impact clear as you are presenting your idea to a general panel. If you are working on a more methodologic project the impact might be more indirect e.g. more efficient trial methodologies may mean new interventions can be evaluated more quickly which will be benefit to patients and the NHS.

Q. I am applying for round 10 of the Post-Doctoral Fellowship award. I have found an NHS host organisation and am an Associate Researcher at a university co-supervising major research projects for psychology trainees. However, my current employment is not within the NHS and is not clinically-based. Will this be a problem?

A. No this is not a problem, trainees who are awarded typically have a host institution that is either a Higher Education Institute or an NHS Trust.

Q. Can your primary supervisor have an MD or PhD? Are there any other requirements for primary supervision?

A. It is important that your primary supervisor has experience of supervising previous PhD students through to completion and that they are able to commit to regular time to meet with you and provide the level of supervision required.

Q. What % of applications get funded?

A. Stats available here:
<http://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/funding/Training-Programmes/TCC-Personal-Award-Applications-Data.pdf>

Q. Is there a limit in the number of DRF applications you will support?

A. The panel make recommendations for funding to Department of Health. The panel are not limited to how many they can recommend for funding, however Department of Health may not fund all applications that are recommended for funding and this is dependent upon the overall budget.

Q. What if i give an initial cost and then find that it is really underestimated, could i ask for a top-up?

A. If you were to be successful, all costs are negotiated at the contracting stage, at which point all costs are agreed and finalised. It is at this stage that we review the costs in your fellowship, however we wouldn't normally increase award values at this stage so it is important that your application is as accurate as possible. Once the contract has been agreed, there is no further scope to increase the costs.

Q. What level of commitment do you need from potential collaborators (especially any private industry collaborators) at the point of application? Given the timescales and the risks with intellectual property, it would be preferable to share details with private industry collaborators if and when funding has been granted but equally if firm commitment has not been gained, will this adversely affect the chance of success of the application?

A. You should detail all collaborators in your application and the level of involvement / commitment they have given so far. Should we / the Panel have queries on this we may ask for more evidence of commitment later on but this isn't usually the case.

Q. With regards to the training component for the DRF, are there any NIHR recommended courses/types of courses that all doctoral candidates should have taken or will take during the award?

A. The DRF is a personal award and as well as obtaining a PhD, it is very much about you and your development as a researcher in the present and the future. The training and development plan should be tailored to your individual development needs, which might include areas of methodology or techniques you would like to learn or build upon your existing skills and you may wish to undertake courses within your institution or externally.

Q. Do we have to have the methodology ready whilst applying or could it be modified along the way?

A. Yes you are required to have your methodology ready when completing your application. It is important that you explain this in the application so that the panel members can understand your proposed research. If you are shortlisted to the interview stage, you will be required to know your project inside out and methodology is often an aspect that the panel will ask questions about.

Q. How vague/clear do you need to be with regards to your post-doctoral '5-year' NIHR plans (bearing in mind we don't yet know our results)?

A. You need to make this as clear as you can. If the panel are struggling to see patient benefit within the timescale your application will struggle.

Q. In the doctoral research fellowship, there is the possibility of ring-fencing 20% clinical time – are the salary costs relating to this still covered by the fellowship?

A. The Doctoral Research Fellowship funds your salary at 100%, this includes up to the 20% clinical time and the time to undertake the award. This option is only open to DRF applicants undertaking the award at 100% FTE.

Q. What level of support is expected for someone running a clinical trial? E.g. is it sufficient to have someone from a trials unit as a collaborator?

A. This will vary depending on the scale of the trial and the applicant's experience. There is extensive guidance on this in application guidance notes; 'Are you intending to undertake a clinical trial' - in the 'research plan' question.

Q. When will round 10 be open for application?

A. It is anticipated that the next round of the NIHR Fellowships programme will open mid to end of October 2016.

Q. There is a section on the form asking if the project has been submitted elsewhere - would this be a problem? My application is also suited to a charity PhD fellowship which I was also planning to apply to.

A. From the perspective of the NIHR, it is possible to apply to the NIHR Fellowships programme and other funding bodies. However, it is advised that you confirm with the other funding bodies you plan to apply to that they have the same rule.

Q. Why is academic time funded at 80% rather than 100%?

A. Higher Education Institutions are funded at 80% because the award also covers Indirect and Estate costs, which are paid directly to the University where you will be hosted. This is based on Full Economic Costs (FEC) approach to funding: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/documents/fecFAQ.pdf>

Q. If I expected that I would be undertaking other (funded) research during the fellowship that is related to the programme proposed - how do I build this in?

A. At Senior levels we expect trainees to be gaining further grant funding and if this is part of your programme of work as described in your application then this can be done as part of the fellowship. If you are involved in other projects and grants outside of your fellowship work you would need to work on the fellowship less than full time. Please discuss with the office if unsure.

Q. If I have undertaken pilot work in preparation for my application, where is it best to include this in the application?

A. This should be included in the research plan section where you are expected to detail the background on previous work in the area.

Q. Can the 20% clinical time be completed in blocks of time or does it need to be spread out across the fellowship?

A. It can be spread out across the fellowship or taken in blocks. The 20% is provided so that you can continue to maintain your clinical skills rather than come out of clinical practice altogether whilst undertaking the award. The primary focus is the DRF award and undertaking the PhD and your training and development plan.

Q. I work in the hospital, do I have to have an academic supervisor?

A. If you mean a HEI based supervisor no you do not have to have an academic supervisor. However, it is important that you explain and justify how the supervisor that you have identified will be of benefit to you and your proposed research project. They should have had experience of supervising PhD students to completion before (assuming you are applying for a DRF). The organisation awarding your PhD may insist that your primary supervisor is based at that HEI.

Q. Can I cost for the time my supervisors will spend mentoring me in this research?

A. No the award does not fund supervisor or mentor time.

Q. For projects with a high amount of formative research to inform a feasibility trial there is a great deal of unpredictability on the exact format an intervention will take. How do you advise describing and costing for this?

A. Make this clear in the application and try to make the costings as accurate as you can. Fellowships don't cover intervention costs however so these will need to be covered by the NHS. You should speak to your NHS organisation and local CRN about this to ensure you cost everything appropriately.

Q. There is the limit for conferences but the application asked for a breakdown of conference related costs but some conference locations beyond 2016 have not yet identified so how can we cost and justify travel, fees etc when these could vary depending if it's based national and international? Also is the limit e.g. DRF £3,000 for the duration of the project or annual allowance?

A. We appreciate that it is not always possible to be exact with costings for conferences, therefore please approximate the costs for travel, subsistence and conference attendance costs and do not exceed the cap of £3,000. It is possible to move conference costs between the years during the award (with permission from TCC) to reflect this.

Q. I will be incurring NHS support costs and so need a signatory from 'NHS or other partner facilities'. My project is in primary care and I understand in primary care SSCs are paid by the relevant CRNs. No one locally seems to be clear as to who I should be asking to be a signatory. Would it be a representative of the local CCG?

A. The NIHR CRN should be able to advise you on this. Please look at the CRN website for further information: <https://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/primarycare/> Please call the office if you are still unsure.

Q. Training does this need to be formal taught courses or can it be placements?

A. The training and development plan should be tailored to your development needs and it is not uncommon for this to include a combination of formal taught courses, an overseas trip and in house training. It is not possible to take time out of the DRF award to attend a placement and then return to the DRF.

Q. The DRF won't fund collaborators directly but can services such as data anonymisation be paid for to collaborators?

A. Any research costs required to carry out the proposed project will be considered and it is only in exceptional circumstances, that the NIHR refuses to fund such costs. Yes,, please include these costs in your application.

Q. If a DRF candidate chooses not to do 20% clinical time, does that mean they are considered as out of programme from their clinical training? If so, does this have implications for maternity leave?

A. You will nearly always be considered out of programme when undertaking a PhD. You should discuss this with your local deanery (LETB).

How many publications does a Senior Research Fellow need to have published to be considered?

A. There isn't a specific number but an outstanding publication record is expected.