

Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship – FAQ

What is the background to the new scheme?

The Trust's existing schemes for postdoctoral clinical academics (the Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowship and Intermediate Clinical Fellowship) have been consolidated to establish a Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship. This will offer the possibility of longer term support, and much greater flexibility in balancing research and clinical training.

What is the rationale for the new scheme?

For many years the Wellcome Trust has been a lead innovator in shaping UK clinical academic training, and so it is timely for us to review our funding offer to ensure that it remains contemporary, and reflects the challenges faced by changing demands of clinical and research training.

The change is the product of substantive consultation with the key stakeholders and is intended to increase flexibility and support for academic clinicians.

What are the key features of the new scheme?

- The Clinical Research Career Development fellowship can be held for up to 8 years in total, split into two Stages separated by a flexible but competitive “gate”
 - No stage will be longer than 5 years of full time funding and each will be peer reviewed
 - All components can be completed part time or pro rata
 - Time to work overseas or in laboratories outside of your home institution can be included
 - Neither stage can be held for longer than 5 years (pro rata) and the total length of fellowship support cannot exceed 8 years (pro rata)
- The scheme is intended to be flexible, and we have included some worked examples for illustrative purposes in Appendix 1.

What is the aim of Stage 1?

The aim of Stage 1 is to provide support for you to consolidate your research skills and explore new research areas to enable you to progress your research vision and maturity.

A Stage 1 fellowship will generally be for 3-4 years, but could be longer or shorter depending on your experience and whether you are proposing a substantive change in research direction.

Funding is not provided for research staff at this “post-doc” Stage.

At the end of Stage 1, you will be expected to demonstrate that you have the research maturity, skills and vision to lead an independent research programme, and that you have the potential to be an independent leader in your chosen field.

You may opt to skip Stage 1 and apply directly to Stage 2, if you can demonstrate you have the skills to lead an independent research programme.

What is the aim of Stage 2?

The aim of Stage 2 awards is to enable you to establish yourself as an independent researcher. By the end of Stage 2, the expectation is that you will have achieved international standing in your chosen field, and will be leading your own research programme.

Stage 2 awards enable you to request funds to build your research team. Therefore, research costs can include funding for a research assistant or research nurse. Stage 2 awards can last for up to 5 years.

You can apply directly to Stage 2 of the scheme.

We anticipate that most fellows will exit Stage 2 fellowships to a competitive fellowship such as a Senior Clinical Fellowship or Senior Lecturer position.

How do I progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2?

A flexible 'gate' will divide the two Stages, and progression from one to the other will involve a competitive application process.

To cross the gate from Stage 1 into Stage 2, you will need to demonstrate that you are able to drive an independent programme of research, and have the potential to achieve international standing as a researcher during the remaining period of the fellowship. The gate will involve a formal application and interview.

Candidates who opt to enter the programme directly to Stage 2 will compete with other fellows and applicants who are applying from Stage 1.

At the time of initial application, you will be asked to estimate when you intend to apply for Stage 2 funding. Depending on progress, you may wish to apply earlier. However:

- Neither Stage can be held for longer than 5 years pro rata;
- The total length of the fellowship should not exceed 8 years pro rata.

No more than two attempts at crossing the gate from Stage 1 to Stage 2 will be considered. Appendix 1 illustrates the flexibility of the scheme with some worked examples.

Can there be a gap between the two Stages?

Yes, there is flexibility in the scheme, and the fellowship can be interrupted at any point, especially to enable completion of clinical training.

How often are applications to cross the gate between Stages 1 and 2 considered?

There will be two competitions *per annum*, and dates will be published on the Trust's website. Interviews will be held in December and May.

Can I undertake routine clinical work alongside my fellowship?

Yes. The Trust is keen to ensure that you maintain and develop your clinical skills. If you have already finished your clinical training, then clinical work should typically be limited to two sessions per week, although for craft specialities we recognise that up to four sessions may be appropriate.

Can I undertake private work alongside the fellowship?

This may be possible, as long as the fellowship is your primary source of income. Wellcome will not consider requests to conduct the fellowship part-time to enable you to undertake private practice work.

Can I undertake clinical training alongside my fellowship?

Yes. A key aim of the fellowship is to enable you to integrate clinical and research training. We recognise that at this stage there may be considerable variation in the amount and type of clinical training required, and individualised training plans are needed.

At the full application stage, you will need to present a detailed plan for how you wish to integrate completion of your clinical training with your research intentions. This will need to be agreed by your sponsor, Training Programme Director (TPD) and postgraduate medical dean. The Trust Staff are available to discuss this with you prior to submission.

Clinical training will not be funded by the fellowship, and salary support will be suspended during periods of full-time clinical training. However other research costs can be continued during this period. We recognise that periods of clinical training may extend the fellowship over a period longer than 8 years.

We anticipate that the majority of fellows will have completed clinical training at the time of entry into Stage 2 of the fellowship; some applicants may also enter Stage 1 of the fellowship at consultant level.

Will I be able to hold the fellowship alongside a Clinical Lecturer position?

Yes. You would need to discuss with the NIHR or funder of the Clinical Lecturer position, but we would not object to this making provision for your salary for the component of the fellowship during which you were undertaking clinical training.

I already hold an MRC Clinical Scientist Fellowship, NIHR Clinician Scientist Award, or equivalent?

If you already hold a fellowship that is enabling you to progress your career to research independence at a postdoctoral level, then you would not normally be eligible for this scheme.

Is the scheme suitable if I currently hold, or have held, a Wellcome Trust:

- **Postdoctoral Training Fellowship for MB/PhD Graduates**
- **Early Postdoctoral Training Fellowship**
- **Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowship for Clinicians**

Yes, these fellowships are equivalent to Stage 1 of the new scheme, so you could apply for Stage 2 funding for a period of up to five years. In exceptional cases, Wellcome may consider an application for further Stage 1 funding, however, the total length of the fellowship (Stage 1 and Stage 2) cannot exceed 5 years funding. Please discuss your personal circumstances with Wellcome before you apply.

Is the scheme suitable if I currently hold, or have held, a Wellcome Trust Intermediate Clinical Fellowship?

Stage 2 of the new fellowship scheme is equivalent to the old Intermediate Clinical Fellowship. Current Intermediate Clinical Fellows, in their last year, may be eligible to apply for a further year's funding on a case by case basis. Please contact Wellcome to discuss this further.

If your fellowship has terminated, or you are currently being supported on a fellowship through a no cost extension, then you would not be eligible for the new scheme.

Will the new postdoctoral scheme make provision for a consultant grade salary?

Yes, so long as you have a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or equivalent and an honorary consultant contract.

Can I spend time overseas?

Yes, so long as this is scientifically justified. Your fellowship will need to be administered by an eligible institution in the UK or Republic of Ireland, with which you have a strong connection, but you may use it to explore other research environments.

Will applications from any particular clinical specialty be especially encouraged?

No, this scheme is open to clinicians from any specialty, including general practice.

Could I spend a portion of my time working in industry?

Yes. Specific issues may need to be considered to ensure that you remain compliant with the Trust's Grant Conditions. Please discuss with the Careers Team in the first instance.

Can I hold a project grant or other research award simultaneously with this Fellowship?

Although the fellowship should represent your core research activity, Fellows at Stage 2 are encouraged to seek additional funding, as part of their journey to independence.

Can I seek further advice on my suitability for the scheme, whether I should apply for Stage 1 or 2, and for how many years of funding I should request?

Yes, the Office welcomes discussion with potential applicants. Please contact:

Dr Clare McVicker – Senior Portfolio Developer (Clinical Fellowships) -
C.McVicker@wellcome.ac.uk

Professor Sara Marshall – Head of Clinical Research –
s.marshall@wellcome.ac.uk

Appendix 1: How might this scheme work in practice?

The scheme is a flexible one, but the following examples are intended to be illustrative:

Example 1: 4+4, switching to 3+5

AB is a speciality registrar in renal medicine who completed her PhD 3 years previously in a laboratory discipline. She has one more year of clinical training before CCT. She has no specific post-doctoral experience, and has decided to gain additional experience in imaging as part of her fellowship.

At application she anticipates taking 4 years at Stage 1 and 4 years at Stage 2, as she is significantly changing the direction of her research. At the start of her fellowship, she decides to do one full time year of research to get this off the ground, and then returns to clinical training for 12 months to get her CCT.

Her research goes well, and she is confident that she can demonstrate research leadership and independence. She decides to bring forward the gate, and takes this after 3 years of fellowship (4 chronological years because fellowship suspended for 12 months for clinical training). She completes 5 further years at Stage 2 and then exits to a Senior Clinical Fellowship.

Calendar year	Fellowship year	
2018	1	Phase I
2019	suspended	Complete 12 months full time clinical training to CCT
2020	2	Stage 1 – now on consultant salary scale
2021	3	Stage 1: Gate passed at 1 st attempt
2022	4	Stage 2
2023	5	Stage 2
2024	6	Stage 2
2025	7	Stage 2
2026	8	Stage 2
9 calendar years	8 fellowship years	

Example 2: Straight to Stage 2 (0+5)

CD is a clinical lecturer in infectious diseases who will CCT just before his fellowship is scheduled to start. His PhD was very successful, and he has continued his research in the same field during his NHLI funded clinical lectureship, which has also been very productive. He is confident that he can demonstrate research leadership and independence at the time of application. He opts to go straight into Stage 2, and applies for a maximum of 5 years of funding, which includes a post-doctoral assistant.

Calendar year	Fellowship year	
2018	1	Stage 2
2019	2	Stage 2
2020	3	Stage 2
2021	4	Stage 2
2022	5	Stage 2
5 calendar years	5 fellowship years	

Example 3: Partial part time working

EF is an academic GP who finishes his PhD after completion of vocational training. He applies to do 4 years at Stage 1 and 4 years at Stage 2, but wishes to work part time (0.5fte) for the first 2 years of his fellowship and then revert to full time.

Calendar year	Fellowship year	
2018	0.5	Stage 1, 0.5wte
2019	1.0	Stage 1, 0.5wte
2020	1.5	Stage 1, 0.5wte
2021	2.0	Stage 1, 0.5wte
2022	3.0	Stage 1, 1.0wte
2023	4.0	Stage 1, 1.0wte, gate passed at first attempt
2024	5.0	Stage 2, 1.0wte
2025	6.0	Stage 2, 1.0wte
2026	7.0	Stage 2, 1.0wte
2027	8.0	Stage 2, 1.0wte
10 calendar years	8 fellowship years	

Example 4: Scottish SCREDS lecturer (3+5)

GH is a plastic surgeon working in Scotland as a SCREDS lecturer (Scottish Clinical Research Excellence Scheme; this is the Scottish equivalent of a clinical lecturer post, but only gives 20% of research time, which can be worked flexibly). She opts for a 3+5 model at the start of her fellowship.

Working with her academic post-graduate dean, she constructs a schedule which starts with two years of full time research, followed by 2 years of clinical training to completion of CCT. During her clinical time, she maintains her research programme by buying time of a research technician and working the 20% time offered by her SCREDS lectureship. Following CCT she does one further year at consultant scale before applying to go through the Gate to Stage 2.

After going through the gate, she does 4 clinical sessions/week to maintain her surgical skills.

Calendar year	Fellowship year	
2018	1	Stage 1
2019	2	Stage 1
2020	suspended	Clinical training, with 20% research time as offered by SCREDS lecturer post
2021	suspended	Clinical training, with 20% research time as offered by SCREDS lecturer post; CCT achieved
2022	3	Stage 1: Gate passed at 1 st attempt
2023	4	Stage 2, 4 clinical sessions/week
2024	5	Stage 2, 4 clinical sessions/week
2025	6	Stage 2, 4 clinical sessions/week
2026	7	Stage 2, 4 clinical sessions/week
2027	8	Stage 2, 4 clinical sessions/week
10 calendar years	8 fellowship years	

Example 5: Maternity leave, flexible working

IJ is an anaesthetist who applies for a fellowship to coincide with obtaining her CCT. She opts for a 3+5 model at the start of her fellowship. She takes two periods of maternity leave (6 months each), and returns to work initially at 60% and then at 80%. After 10 calendar years of her fellowship, she opts to work full time. During this time, she does between 2-3 clinical sessions/week.

Calendar year	Fellowship year	
2018	1	Stage 1; full time
2019	1.5	Stage 1; 6 months maternity leave
2020	2.3	Stage 1; part time (80% fte)
2021	3.1	Gate passed at 1st attempt, working 80%fte
2022	3.6	Stage 2; 6 months maternity leave
2023	4.2	Stage 2; part time (60% fte)
2024	4.8	Stage 2; part time (60% fte)
2025	5.4	Stage 2; part time (60% fte)
2026	6.0	Stage 2; part time (60% fte)
2027	6.6	Stage 2; part time (60% fte)
2028	7.6	Stage 2; full time
2029	8.0	Stage 2: 4 months. Then exits to senior clinical fellowship
Calendar years: 12 years 4 months	8 fellowship years	