

Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship (CRCDF) – FAQ

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What is the purpose of the CRCDF scheme?

The CRCDF scheme offers full-time support to exceptional health care professionals who are building an academic career enabling them to continue their research at postdoctoral level.

What professions are included under the term Health Care Professionals?

Health care professionals include among others medics, dentists, vets, clinical psychologists, public health practitioners, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals. This list is not exhaustive and will be revised to maintain relevance with the clinically qualified workforce (see Appendix 2).

Why is there a separate scheme for health care professionals?

Wellcome recognises that health care professionals of all disciplines must fulfil the professional requirements of their regulatory council. This scheme allows for fellows to maintain this balance.

What are the key features of the scheme?

The scheme has a postdoctoral component (Stage 1) and an early independent component (Stage 2).

- 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” (formal application process).
- 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?

This is the postdoctoral component of a CRCDF.

The aim of Stage 1 is to provide support for you to consolidate your research skills, acquire new 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 a research assistant or equivalent 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. Most people will have undertaken a period of postdoctoral research to be able to demonstrate this.

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 national/international standing in your chosen field, and will be leading your own research programme.

What is the aim of Stage 2?

This is the early independent component of a CRCDF.

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 national/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, nurse or technician. Stage 2 awards can last for up to 5 years.

You can apply directly to Stage 2 of the scheme if you can demonstrate you have the skills to lead an independent research programme. Most people will have undertaken a period of postdoctoral research to be able to demonstrate this.

At the end of Stage 2, we anticipate that fellows will be in a strong position to apply for a competitive fellowship, such as a Senior Research Fellowship, or a Senior Lecturer position.

How do I progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2?

A competitive 'gate' will divide the two Stages, and progression from one to the other will involve a competitive application process. This will comprise a formal new application and interview if shortlisted.

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.

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

No more than two attempts at each Stage will be considered.

Appendix 1 illustrates the flexibility of the scheme with some worked examples.

When progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 2, will there be a focus on the training that the fellow has received and data that has been generated at Stage 1?

At Stage 1, we are looking for individuals who demonstrate a strong plan for developing and acquiring new research skills and consolidating their research experience to date. At Stage 2, candidates should demonstrate: strong research skills and experience; that they are ready to lead an innovative and creative research programme; and the potential to become an international leader in the field. Progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2 depends on previous experience, methodological challenges, development of new skills and many other factors.

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; for example, to enable completion of clinical training.

I have applied for a CRCDF and have been unsuccessful. Can I re-apply?

You can make two applications at Stage 1 and Stage 2. If you are re-applying to the same stage, we strongly advise that you contact Wellcome to further discuss your application.

When is the right time for me to apply?

The timing of an application is at your discretion. However, we would advise that you carefully consider the timing of your application. This fellowship scheme is highly competitive, and we would advise candidates to apply when they consider that their track record is as strong as it can be; for instance, you might consider submitting an application after publishing an important output or having obtained some interesting data. If you have undertaken dedicated research time e.g. from a PhD, ACF, ACL or periods of postdoctoral research time, you should think about how best to use this time to support an application.

You should consider timing within the context of your clinical training, and whether your plans would be strengthened by completing some further clinical training before applying for a fellowship.

A Stage 1 fellowship can be taken either at specialist registrar or consultant stage. In general, most Stage 2 fellowships are taken after CCT i.e. as consultants.

If you are a medic who is not on the specialist register and do not have an NTN, please contact Wellcome to further discuss your eligibility. For non-medical, clinical disciplines, it is often useful to discuss timing on a case by case basis.

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.

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. Wellcome Staff are available to discuss this with you prior to submission.

In terms of presenting a detailed plan, you will need to think about how many years of clinical training you wish to incorporate and how this can be undertaken in practice. For instance, you may wish to consider whether undertaking blocks of clinical training interspersed between periods of research would work best. You will need to consider whether you would be able to complete sufficient clinical training within these blocks, and what would happen to your research whilst you are undertaking full-time clinical training. Overall, you would need to outline how you will be dedicating sufficient periods of time to your academic work, to ensure that you will deliver on your fellowship, whilst at the same time satisfying your clinical training requirements.

If you are putting your fellowship on hold to undertake clinical training, we will not pay your salary for this clinical training time. Salary support will be suspended during periods of full-time clinical training. However, other research costs may be continued during this period. We will consider this on a case-by-case basis.

We recognise that periods of clinical training may extend the fellowship over a period longer than 8 years.

We anticipate that most 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.

[It is a requirement that fellows undergo further clinical training, or is it sufficient to just maintain clinical competencies through clinical work?](#)

No, there is no expectation for fellows to undergo further clinical training if they are in clinical practice.

We specify that applicants must be in some form of clinical practice to apply to this scheme. However, the amount of clinical time that is required should be determined by the applicant, their appraisers and regulatory council. We understand that the time of clinical practice needed varies in each professional group and within specialties.

[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. Please note that Wellcome will pay your salary costs as part of this fellowship, including for clinical work.

We understand that the time and type of clinical practice varies in each professional group and within specialties.

[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.

I gained my PhD some time ago but I have not been research active due to clinical training commitments. Can I apply to this scheme and will I be competitive?

Yes, you can apply to our scheme. All applications are evaluated on their own merit and according to an applicant's career stage, taking into account the actual time spent doing research versus clinical training. For this reason, it is important that you clearly articulate your career path and commitments in the application

I am a clinician based outside of the UK. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, we welcome applications from non-UK based applicants. Please see the 'Eligibility and Suitability' section on the Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship webpage for further information regarding the eligibility criteria for the scheme. If you are currently in clinical training outside of the UK and will not have completed your training by the time your proposed fellowship begins, then please contact us before you apply to discuss your plans.

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

These fellowships are considered as equivalent to a Stage 2 CRCDF.

If you already hold, or have held, 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:

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

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 any Stage 1 fellowship cannot exceed 5 years' funding. Please discuss your personal circumstances with Wellcome before you apply.

Will the CRCDF 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.

I am currently employed by my host institution on a consultant level contract which covers 11 programmed activities a week; will my fellowship support this level of salary?

Yes. Wellcome will make salary provision for up to 11 programmed activities (PAs) per week, of which one PA may be an additional or extra programmed activity (APA/EPA).

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.

Do I have to spend time overseas?

It is not necessary to spend any time based overseas, as short trips, remote meetings or sharing of data/tools can be sufficient. We would advise that you base yourself in the lab/institute that is going to best support you and your research.

Will applications from any particular clinical specialty be especially encouraged?

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

Is my project sufficiently “clinical” to satisfy the remit of the fellowship scheme? Is my fellowship too “clinical” to be considered for this scheme?

Wellcome does not have any criteria as to how “clinical” a project should be for this fellowship scheme. Your application should clearly articulate your research plans and how you envisage that the proposed fellowship would be a platform for your career progression.

I am thinking of changing research direction or changing fields, to explore a new area. Can this be considered under this fellowship scheme?

Yes, we can accept applications from candidates who are planning to change research direction or fields.

You would need to clearly explain the rationale for the change of direction, how the fellowship will address your training needs, and how the proposed change of direction would set you up for the next stage of your career within your application.

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?

The fellowship should represent your core research activity.

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 be the main supervisor for a PhD student whilst holding this award?

Yes, providing that this meets your University's requirements and that your fellowship research remains your priority.

Please note that funds for a PhD student stipend cannot be requested via this fellowship scheme.

Who should I indicate as my sponsor?

Your sponsor will be either:

- Stage 1 – the person who will be supervising your postdoctoral Stage 1 fellowship
- Stage 2 – the Head of Department or equivalent

The Sponsor should be able to guarantee that the space and resources that you require for your research will be made available to you, and that your host institution will administer the fellowship for its proposed duration.

Who should be a Research Sponsor on my application?

A Research Sponsor is required if you plan to spend substantial time at a separate institution from your administering organisation. They should be able to guarantee that space and resources will be available to you at this additional institution.

Which letters of support do I need to include in my application?

You will need to include letters of support from:

- your Sponsor.
- your Research Sponsors (not at your host organisation)
- a senior member of your host organisation (eg Head of Department, Institute Director, Faculty Dean, Dean of your Medical School, etc.) This letter should indicate support for you and your proposal. It should demonstrate that you will be given the support and mentorship you need in pursuit of a career as a clinical academic, as well as the guarantee of space and access to core facilities. Where this individual is also your Sponsor, the same letter of support can be provided

For all candidates planning to integrate their formal clinical training requirements into the fellowship, a letter of support from your Training Programme Director will also be required

Can I contact Wellcome for advice before submitting an application?

Yes, we are happy to provide individual advice.

If you have a question about eligibility or the application process please contact the [Grants Helpdesk](#).

Questions about your career and/or the scope and content of your proposal will be escalated to the relevant person in the [Science team](#). For these queries, please, provide:

- An up-to-date copy of your CV;
- Your plans for remaining clinically active or for specialty training if currently in training
- An outline of your project (max 2 pages, please do not send the full application) including aims and methods
- High level budget

After receiving this information, we will be contact you to set up a phone meeting. We can provide advice about application Stage and career plans, the proposed research proposal and its fit for a fellowship project. We are also happy to respond to any other queries you may have. We have noted that applicants who prepare the meeting and queries in advance benefit most of these feedback sessions.

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 first 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 first 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	1.0	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 first 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 exists to Senior Clinical Fellowship.
Calendar years: 12 years 4 months	8 fellowship years	

Appendix 2: Health Care Professions

ICA

HEE/NIHR Integrated Clinical Academic Programme
for non-medical healthcare professionals

NHS

Eligible Professions and Regulators

Profession	Regulator with which applicants must hold registration/register
AHP Professions: Art therapist Podiatrist Dietician Occupational therapist Orthoptist Orthotist and Prosthetist Paramedic Physiotherapist Radiographer (diagnostic and therapeutic) Speech and language therapist Drama therapist Music therapist	Health and Care Professions Council
Chiropractor	General Chiropractic Council
Practitioner Psychologist	Health and Care Professions Council
Healthcare Scientists: Professionals that work in one of the following broad areas of practice, which together cover over 45 different professional specialisms: Life Sciences/Clinical Laboratory Sciences; Physiological Sciences; Clinical Bioinformatics; Physical Sciences (incorporating Medical Physics) and Clinical Engineering. These include clinical scientists, biomedical scientists, clinical physiologists and clinical technologists	Health and Care Professions Council, or the PSA accredited Academy for Healthcare Science register: www.ahcs.ac.uk
Non-Medical Public Health Specialty Trainees, Specialists and Consultants	Specialty Trainees: Faculty of Public Health Specialists and Consultants: The UK Public Health Register
Nurse and Midwife: Nurse Midwife Health visitor	Nursing and Midwifery Council
Operating Department Practitioner	Health and Care Professions Council
Optometrist and Dispensing Optician	General Optical Council
Osteopath	General Osteopathic Council
Pharmacy Professions: Pharmacist Pharmacy technician	General Pharmaceutical Council
Wider Dental Team Professions: Dental hygienist Dental nurse Dental therapist	General Dental Council

Prospective applicants holding NMC or HCPC registrations but not listed above should contact the NIHR TCC to discuss their eligibility further: tccawards@nihr.ac.uk