

PhD Programmes for Health Professionals - FAQ

Background

This scheme funds PhD programmes that offer health professionals outstanding research training in supportive and inclusive research environments. The competition is open to applications that address the aims of creating knowledge, building research capability, and training a diverse group of future leaders in clinical academia. The ambition is to create and support a positive, enabling, and diverse clinical academic ecosystem, through catalysing exemplar programmes of clinical research training.

For ease, the questions have been grouped into the following categories: [Definitions](#), [General](#), [Eligibility](#), [Programme structure](#), [Partnerships](#), [Directors and supervisors](#), [Organisational support](#), [Research culture](#), [Diversity and inclusion](#), [Costs](#)

Any updates will be added to the end of the document:

[Updates added 18 December 2020](#)

Definitions

Organisation: a degree-awarding organisation in UK or Republic of Ireland at which fellows will be hosted and formally enrolled for a PhD degree

Partner: any other organisation which will provide input into the programme; for example, an NHS Trust or Health Board, private company, or degree awarding organisation outside the UK or Republic of Ireland.

A single-centre application is an application involving one degree-awarding organisation in UK or Republic of Ireland. It can include any number of partners.

A consortium application is an application involving more than one organisation. It can include any number of partner organisations.

General

How will programmes fit within Wellcome's new strategy?

Wellcome supports science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone. Programmes must provide training in research within [our new vision and strategy](#). This includes discovery research as well as research within our new health challenges.

Our organisation already hosts a PhD Programme for Clinicians/Health Professionals. Can we apply?

Yes. We expect that some applications will follow on from previous programmes supported by a variety of sources (including Wellcome) and/or exist alongside other PhD funding. All applications to this competition will need to clearly articulate the added value of the proposed programme, and its relationship to any existing programmes (local or otherwise).

Do I need to have had Wellcome funding or hold an existing Wellcome grant to apply to this scheme?

No. We welcome applications from applicants and organisations who have not received Wellcome funding to date, as well as current and previous Wellcome grant holders.

Are you looking for applications from specific disciplines?

No, programmes can focus on any discipline – including science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), clinical research and experimental medicine, applied research, innovations, and humanities and social science – as long as the research is related to health.

Programmes can be built around geography (e.g. single geographic location, or group of organisations with a region) or around a specific research theme (e.g. data science) or clinical specialty (e.g. primary care), or a mix of the above.

Is there a requirement for programmes to fit within the Wellcome's new Health Challenges?

No. While we encourage applications that align with Wellcome's new Health Challenges, this is not a requirement and will not automatically result in prioritisation of your application. All applications will be considered within the context of the competition and according to the criteria outlined on the scheme page.

Will existing Wellcome Clinical PhD programmes be considered separately?

No, if you are applying to renew an existing Wellcome-funded PhD programme, your application will be considered in competition with the other proposals. All proposals will be considered on their individual merits and against the criteria outlined on the scheme page.

Is there a preliminary application stage?

No, there is no preliminary application for this competition. Wellcome staff will assess your full application. If your proposal is eligible, suitable, you will be invited to an interview.

Eligibility

Will the competition be limited to host organisations in the UK and Republic of Ireland?

Yes, only [eligible](#) host organisations in the UK or Republic of Ireland can apply.

Are non-higher education institutes, for example Royal Colleges or research institutes, eligible to apply?

Yes, UK and Republic of Ireland non-Higher Education Institutes may be eligible to convene and apply as lead organisation. All organisations must be able to sign up to our [grant conditions](#), and have the relevant financial infrastructure in place to administer grants. A well-articulated management structure will be particularly important where the host organisation is not a university.

Who would be considered eligible fellows on these programmes?

Fellows recruited to a programme will be practicing healthcare professionals and be registered with a national professional regulatory body (e.g. the General Medical Council, Health and Care Professions Council) in the country in which the PhD programme is based.

Successful programmes will be designed to be open to, and to support, all health care professionals (doctors, dieticians, physiotherapists etc) unless there is a specific rationale for exclusion.

Programmes can make a case to limit their fellows to a particular group if there is a strong rationale for being specifically designed for that group.

Are non-health professionals eligible?

No. These programmes are designed to support healthcare professionals seeking to combine a clinical and academic career.

Are vets considered health professionals under this scheme?

Yes, vets are considered as health professionals under this scheme. They must be registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Programme Structure

How long will each PhD fellowship be for?

The duration of each PhD fellowship will be 3 years FTE, including dedicated time for maintaining clinical skills.

How many fellows will each Programme support?

We will provide funding for one cohort per year, for 5 years, per programme. Each cohort must have 3-5 fellows. Therefore, each programme will be awarded funding for 15-25 fellowships.

Can a programme incorporate a year for fellows to undertake a Masters degree?

While a Master's degree can be incorporated into the programme structure, Wellcome will not provide funding for this component; local funding must be leveraged.

Will Wellcome support intercalated MB/PhDs?

No. These fellowships are specifically designed for individuals who have completed their undergraduate training, are registered with their professional regulatory body, and are seeking to undertake a PhD.

Can fellows continue to do clinical work during their fellowship?

Yes. Fellows will be permitted to do up to 0.2 FTE clinical work to maintain their clinical skills. For craft specialists (e.g. surgeons), this will be increased to 0.4 FTE. Funding for this is included within the budget envelope of the programme.

Can fellows take their PhD fellowship part time in order to continue their clinical training for the remaining FTE?

Fellows may take their PhD fellowship part time if this is their normal working pattern. However, they are not permitted to undertake their fellowship part time as part of a full-time working pattern in order to continue their clinical training.

Partnerships

Will there be potential for overseas partnerships?

Overseas partnerships can be included within the programme plans. However, the lead organisation must be in the UK or Republic of Ireland. Our expectation is that the PhD awarding universities will be based in the UK or Republic of Ireland.

Can programmes be structured as a consortium between different organisations?

Yes. We encourage programmes structured as a consortium to apply. One organisation within the consortium must be the lead for the application.

Will industry collaborations be allowed?

Yes, industry collaborations can be included as part of the programme structure, if appropriate.

Is co-branding of fellows with other funding sources allowed?

While we encourage programmes to seek local funding for matched fellowships, it is not possible for Wellcome-funded fellows to be co-branded with another funding agency outside a formal partnership negotiated with Wellcome. For each fellow, the programme management should know whether they are 100% Wellcome funded or funded from other sources. No fellow should be part funded by Wellcome during their core PhD years. Funding for run-in training e.g. a Master's year from local sources is allowed, but individuals won't be considered as Wellcome-funded fellows or be covered by our policies until they start their Wellcome-funded PhD.

Directors and supervisors

Who can be a Programme Director?

Our expectation is that programme directors will be individuals with a strong track record in training and supporting early career researchers, and that the programme leadership team as a whole should

have a strong research track record in the relevant field(s). Programme directors do not have to be Health Professionals. They do not have to have a professorial appointment.

All programme directors and co-directors must hold a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract, or the guarantee of one, at an eligible host organisation in the UK or Republic of Ireland. This may be academic or clinical.

How many people can be named as programme directors?

Our expectation is that clinical PhD programmes will be managed by a single director, in association with a named team of co-directors. The structure and skill mix of the team is for the applicants to decide; however, the roles and responsibilities of individual members of the team should be specified in the application, and the management structure clearly articulated.

Can directors or supervisors be involved in more than one application?

A director can only lead one programme.

A supervisor may be associated with more than one programme (at their host organisation or another organisation). The commitment of each supervisor to student supervision and any other managerial responsibilities should be considered.

How many supervisors should make up the supervisory pool?

We do not have any requirements for the size of the supervisory pool. The pool should comprise sufficient supervisors to accommodate the overall number of fellows. Programmes should also ensure that there is a breadth of expertise to give fellows a good range of choice when selecting their PhD projects. In general, we would not expect an individual to be the main supervisor for more than two Wellcome-funded fellows at the same time.

Can newly independent researchers/lecturers be supervisors?

Yes. You should consider how the programme will ensure that all supervisors are skilled and/or supported to develop their skills in PhD training and in diverse and inclusive leadership.

Organisational support

How many applications can a single organisation be involved in?

Our expectation is that an eligible organisation will submit a maximum of one application for a programme *solely based* at that organisation. If different groups of applicants want to apply for a single-centre programme, the organisation must prioritise potential applications and decide which one to submit to us.

In addition, organisations may host or participate in consortia applications, including as lead institution, but each organisation should commit to only what they can deliver if all applications are successful.

Each programme must be distinct from each other.

What are your expectations regarding organisational contributions?

We are looking for a demonstrable commitment from all associated institutions to delivering on the aims of the programme. This can take many forms. It could include, but is not limited to, support for programme administration; support for cultural change e.g. in improving diversity and inclusion; and, if appropriate, additional fellowships.

Directors must have the full support of the host organisation to deliver on the commitments made. This includes having dedicated time to manage the programme, and recognition from the organisation for the important role played.

All supervisors must have the time and support from their department and organisation to take on the responsibility of supervision.

A letter of support from the Vice Chancellor(s) or equivalent is required to set out the details of any organisational support.

Research Culture

What are your expectations around research culture? Do we need to specifically address this within the application?

Wellcome is committed to improving research culture within the UK clinical research training environment. Our ambition is to create and support a positive, enabling, and diverse clinical academic ecosystem, through catalysing exemplar programmes of clinical research training.

We recognise the importance of enabling individual programmes to think creatively about how research culture can be improved. Rather than provide a standard definition and metrics of research culture, we are asking programme directors to define and develop their own research culture road map, which will include clear delivery plans that evidence how they will address the aspects of culture that they are committed to improving, and clearly articulated monitoring and evaluation plans.

Aspects covered may include but would not be limited to: leadership training, support for career paths and transitions; research integrity; opportunities for permeability between sectors; support for collaborative activities; interdisciplinarity; support for student and staff mental health; and approaches and policies relating to bullying and harassment.

For programmes open to doctors and dentists, eligible organisations will be expected to sign up to, endorse and be able to evidence how they implement the clinical principles and obligations which sets out the support required for clinical academic careers:

<https://wellcome.org/sites/default/files/clinical-principles-and-obligations-plus-faqs-2018-08.pdf>

There is currently no comparable document for other health professionals.

Diversity and Inclusion

What are your requirements for Diversity and Inclusion? Do we need to address this in the application?

All institutions will be required to have a strategy for recruitment that encourages a diverse and inclusive culture for Health Professionals. Applicants are asked to describe clear and stretching targets for recruitment of diverse fellows and supervisors, alongside an EDI monitoring and evaluation plan, outlining how they will meet those targets and share their progress.

Costs

How will funding be provided for programmes?

The programme director(s) for each funded programme will be awarded a single block grant, to provide funding for all fellowships associated with a programme.

Funds can be managed flexibly by the programme director(s) to meet the needs of the cohort and each fellow. This will allow support to be tailored to the individual fellow by those best placed to understand their requirements.

The block grant will be based on the number of fellows in each intake and the research requirements of the programme, to include funds for:

- a salary on the relevant clinical pay scale
- PhD registration fees at the UK or Republic of Ireland student rate
- college fees (where required)
- research expenses
- training, including technical, discipline-specific and transferable skills, but excluding any training related to clinical professional development

- travel costs, including registration fees and childcare or any other caring responsibility cost for conferences.

Will funding for specific types of research be provided?

Where appropriate, funding will be provided as part of the block grant for specific types of research, including research involving animals, experimental medicine, interventional clinical trials, global health research or human imaging.

Where fellows are not eligible for home tuition fee rates will you provide additional funds?

No. Our expectation is that host organisations will cover the difference in fees for fellows who are not eligible for the home (UK or Republic of Ireland) rate.

Will the budget include salary support for a programme administrator/manager?

No. Our expectation is that the support required to manage the programme will be provided as in-kind support from the host institution.

Updates added 18 December 2020

Please also see the definitions section at the top of this document.

What is your definition of a health professional?

Our definition of a health professional is an individual who is registered with a national professional regulatory body (e.g. the General Medical Council, Health and Care Professions Council) in the country in which the PhD programme is based. This would include, but not be limited to, the following professions:

- Allied Health Professionals (Art Therapists, Chiropedists/Podiatrists, Dieticians, Drama Therapists, Music Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Operating Department Practitioners, Orthoptists, Osteopaths, Paramedics, Physiotherapists, Prosthetists and Orthotists, Radiographers and Speech and Language Therapists)
- Chiropractors
- Clinical psychologists
- Dentists
- Dental hygienists
- Dental nurses
- Dental therapists
- Healthcare scientists (in life sciences, physiological sciences, physical sciences and biomechanical engineering, and bioinformatics)
- Health Visitors
- Medics
- Midwives
- Non-medical Public Health Specialty Trainees, specialists or Consultants
- Nurses
- Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians
- Osteopaths
- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy technicians
- Practitioner Psychologists
- Vets

Is it possible to have a programme composed of a UK or Republic of Ireland organisation and overseas partners?

Yes, whilst the host organisation must be based in the UK or Republic of Ireland, other partners can be based elsewhere in the world. However, there should be a very clear rationale for the value of overseas partners to the proposed programme; for example, expertise or support unavailable in the UK or Republic of Ireland.

To note, Wellcome will not fund activities that involve the transfer of funds into mainland China.

How long can fellows spend overseas at an overseas partner?

For programmes planning a global health focus, the design could accommodate fellows being resident in a low- or middle-income country for up to 36 months.

Other programmes can be designed to include placements of up to 6 months per fellow in a high-income country. The rationale and benefit of such placements must be very clearly articulated.

Must all fellows be offered an overseas placement where a programme is designed to include an overseas partner?

No, programmes can be structured to offer an overseas placement to some, but not all, of the fellows in each cohort.

What is your definition of an organisation versus a partner?

Please see the definitions at the start of this document.

An *organisation* is a degree-awarding body in the UK or Republic of Ireland at which fellows will be hosted and formally enrolled for a PhD degree. A *partner* is any other organisation which will provide input into the programme; for example, an NHS Trust or Health Board, private company, or degree awarding organisation outside the UK or Republic of Ireland.

In a consortium application, should degrees be conferred by the organisation at which fellows are based?

Yes, our expectation is that where a consortium application is proposed, degrees should be conferred by the organisations at which fellows are based.

Can degrees be conferred by overseas partners?

No, we expect that PhD degrees will be conferred by the UK or Republic of Ireland organisation.

Can I discuss my application with Wellcome?

Wellcome is willing to provide advice and feedback on a one A4 page outline of your proposal if helpful. Please send your outline to clinicaphd@wellcome.org and we will subsequently be in touch in due course. We are unable to enter into further, iterative discussions of an application.