

South West Integrated Clinical Academic (ICA) Programme

HEE-NIHR Pre-doctoral bridging
award (2022/23)

Guidance notes

For further information contact: SW.ICAP@nihr.ac.uk

Introduction

Health Education England (HEE) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) have established an overarching Integrated Clinical Academic (ICA) Programme for registered health, social care and scientific professionals (excluding doctors and dentists) who hold registration with [ICA approved regulatory bodies](#). The programme is for those who wish to develop careers that combine research and research leadership along with continued practice and professional development. The programme is intended to increase research capacity to improve health and care, by developing people with the potential and aspiration to become clinical/practitioner academics and leading independent research in the future.

The South West region has received national funding to support a number of bridging awards. This specific pre-doctoral bridging award supports individuals that have some research experience and is developing their research profile, have completed Masters level research training and aspire to gain funding to undertake doctoral research training. In the South West region, the pre-doctoral bridging award offers you the unique opportunity to develop an individualised, structured, development programme to advance your plans working with your clinical academic supervisor. The pre-doctoral bridging award should help you to strengthen your research profile and develop a doctoral fellowship application.

The South West Internship programme is aligned to eligibility criteria for the HEE-NIHR Doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship (DCAF) scheme (formerly the HEE-NIHR ICA Clinical Doctorate Fellowship). Prospective applicants must be employed by an NHS body based in England or by any other English provider of publicly or third sector funded health and/or social care services or by a recognised Higher Education Institution (HEI) based in England. The proposed clinical academic supervisor must be affiliated to a recognised Higher Education Institute based in England. It is essential that the proposed research area matches to HEE-NIHR interests (see [NIHR remit for personal awards](#)) and lends itself to development as a doctoral programme. Moreover, it is important for applicants to have support from their line manager.

Useful link: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/academy-programmes/hee-nihr-integrated-clinical-academic-programme.htm>

Eligibility

The awards are open to Allied Health, Chiropractic, Dental Care, Optical, Osteopathic, Pharmacy and non-medical Public Health professionals, Healthcare Scientists, Midwives, Nurses, Practitioner Psychologists and Social workers. To be eligible for the pre-doctoral bridging award, you will need to provide evidence that you have the following:

- Current registration with a relevant regulatory body as per HEE-NIHR ICA programme requirements ([ICA approved regulatory bodies](#)).
- Applicants must hold substantive employment by a recognised Higher Education Institution (HEI) based in England, an NHS body based in England or by any other English provider of publicly or third sector funded health and/or social care services (for example, a commissioned social enterprise, local authority or hospice).
- Your employment is based and connected to the following ICSs: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire.
- Applicants must have at least one year's experience of professional, post-graduation practice
- Applicants must hold a First Class or Upper Second Class bachelor's degree or a Masters degree. For those without a bachelor's degree, evidence of postgraduate study at Level 7 is desirable.
- Applicants must have some research experience and/or research training to support preparedness for progressing to a PhD scheme.
- Support from your employer to undertake the award

If you have previously received a South West internship award, you may apply for this pre-doctoral award. Provide clear evidence of the outcomes of this award in your application.

If you have applied previously for this award and been unsuccessful, you are welcome to apply again. There is no restriction on application attempts.

Duration of the award

You are expected to take up the award between 1st March 2023 and 30th September 2023. To allow for personal circumstance and service requirements, you can plan your pre-doctoral award programme flexibly up to a period of 12 months. Requests for an extension on this period will be considered on an individual basis. You will be asked to specify the planned duration of your programme and to provide an outline plan.

How much is the award and how can the funding be used?

Each successful applicant will be awarded up to a maximum of £12,000 to cover costs including salary backfill, incidental costs, research and clinical supervision, and formal education costs. Suggestions on how the budget can be spent are presented below;

Clinical backfill: it is recognised that this may form the main budget expenditure. The most appropriate backfill arrangements can be decided by the awardee and their line manager.

Research project: this could include anything related to the applied research objectives from patient and public involvement expenses, travel expenses, equipment such as digital voice records, specialist software, transcription services, etc to support development of a project idea or practical skills. Please note that we are unable to fund laptops or computers.

Academic supervision and formal teaching: it is essential to have academic supervision throughout the award. Ideally this support should be from a University within the South West region, however it is recognised that some professional groups may have to find this support from outside of the region. It is recommended that academic supervision costs do not exceed 10% of the overall spending plan. Tailored support should allow award holders to develop a PhD application. This could include, but is not limited to: refining a research question, methods, PPI plans and funding requirements, a systematic review as first author, engagement with a wider research project and contribution to authoring a paper, development of research leadership skills. Taught sessions or focused mentorship to support wider development as a clinical academic such as building a sustainable research career; dissemination of good practice; personal effectiveness and development of a research aware and active multi-professional workforce.

Dissemination costs: an element of the award is to disseminate the findings through publications and/or conference presentations. Therefore, the award can be used to fund conferences. Publication costs will only be provided where there is robust justification.

The amount awarded will be paid directly to the awardee's employer. It is recommended that the spending plans are checked by finance teams prior to submission. A confirmed finance plan will be required from successful applicants prior to commencement of the award.

Award Support and Monitoring

Successful applicants will be expected to attend two sessions with holders of Southwest ICA awards. The sessions will offer opportunities to engage with your peer group of awardees, review your progress and consider requirements for application to NIHR ICA awards. You will be required to present about your award activities at one of the sessions.

A written progress report will be required at the half-way point of your programme (maximum of 2 pages) to provide an update on progress with objectives, challenges and successes, any amendments to plans (where applicable) and priorities for the remaining period.

A final report will be completed at the end of the award (maximum of 4 pages) to provide a summary of achievement of objectives and outcomes, challenges and successes, financial summary and future plans.

Preparing an application

You can arrange to get further information or advice about the award by emailing SW.ICAP@nhr.ac.uk or the [named HEI contacts](#) included below.

Prior to submitting an application, it is recommended that applicants contact the research leads within your organisation to discuss applying for this award and investigate what support and help is available to you. You will also require support from a clinical academic supervisor to prepare your application. Ensure that you allow sufficient time to discuss your plans with your line manager/employer and your proposed supervisor(s).

HEI Contacts for ICA

The following people can be contacted with enquiries about potential clinical academic supervisors with relevant expertise.

AECC University College: Prof David Newell (dnewell@aecc.ac.uk)

Bournemouth University: Prof Jane Murphy (jmurphy@bournemouth.ac.uk)

Plymouth Marjon University: Prof Gary Shum (gshum@marjon.ac.uk)

University of Bath: Dr Tim Rennie (twr32@bath.ac.uk)

University of Exeter: Prof. Vicki Goodwin (V.goodwin@exeter.ac.uk)

University of Gloucestershire: Prof. Jane Melton (jmelton@glos.ac.uk)

University of Plymouth: Dr Lisa Bunn (lisa.bunn@plymouth.ac.uk)

UWE Bristol: Assoc Prof. Mary Cramp (mary.cramp@uwe.ac.uk)

You will need to prepare/obtain the following documents for your application.

- A completed checklist (see Appendix 1)
- Curriculum Vitae (max. of 3 pages, 12 pt font)
- Statement letter for pre-doctoral award (max. of 1,000 words excl. references)
- Timetable for the programme
- Spending plan for the £12,000 budget
- Letter of support from line manager
- Letter of support from clinical academic supervisor

**Please refer to the checklist for further information about these items.
Appendix 2 contains further information about preparing a sound application.**

Application Process

Please submit a completed checklist (Appendix 1) and all corresponding documentation to SW.ICAP@nhr.ac.uk: by **12 Midday, Tuesday 15th November 2022**. Where possible include the checklist, your CV, your statement letter, timetable, and spending plan as one document (either word document or pdf). The checklist is available as a Microsoft Word document; email SW.ICAP@nhr.ac.uk to obtain a copy. Emails sent from work email addresses will be accepted in place of written signatures.

The Pre-doctoral bridging awards will be awarded in an open competition. The selection processes and administration of the awards are overseen by HEE South West. Following the submission deadline, applications will be checked for completeness. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Complete applications will be circulated for review and independent scoring by a selection committee. The selection committee will discuss the applications and select candidates to be invited for interview.

Panel interviews will be held on Tuesday 13th December 2022. If you are invited to interview, you will have a minimum of 10 days' notice. Interviews will be scheduled for 20 minutes and will occur virtually. Your interview panel will have access to your written application; they will make a recommendation for funding based on your interview, supported by your written application.

Key dates

Closing date for applications:	Midday, Tuesday 15 th November 2022
Interview dates: Virtual via web-based conferencing	Tuesday 13 th December 2022

NOTE:

- There will be no choice of interview dates. Applicants who choose to apply will need to be available for interview on the above dates. We will provide as much notice as possible allowing for a robust selection process. Where possible, we will try to accommodate specific needs for interview times.
- You will be notified about the outcomes of your application via email to the address that you have provided.

Appendix 1: Pre-Doctoral Award – Checklist

Name:		
Contact details:	Email:	
	Telephone:	
<i>Please confirm that you have provided all the information listed below before submission. Incomplete submissions will not be considered.</i>		Answer Yes/No
1. Registration with an appropriate UK regulatory and professional body Regulatory/professional body: Registration number:		
2. Curriculum Vitae (max. of 3 pages, 12 pt font) confirming the following; a) Employment with a provider of health and/or care services in line with eligibility criteria b) Minimum of one year's post registration practice		
3. Statement letter for bridging award (max. of 1,000 words excl. references): a) Reason for applying for the award (including capability to continue on a clinical academic career pathway and planned benefits for career plans) b) Outline of proposed activity (including background to the research area and up to 10 references) c) Planned outcomes of the award (including how these address clinical/practice priorities and needs and plans for doctoral application) d) Impact on quality of patient care (specify how your planned research and related clinical practice will improve the quality of patient care) e) Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (specify any PPIE you have done or plan to do during the award)		
4. Timetable for the pre-doctoral bridging programme Provide a schedule for the key activities of the award and specifies the planned duration		
5. A detailed spending plan of up to £12,000 for the award period Please check your budget with your line manager and/or finance team if possible.		
6. Letter of support from line manager Line managers are requested to confirm that they agree in principle to support the applicant and their application. Emails from work email address are acceptable.		
7. Letter of support from clinical academic supervisor Supervisors are requested to highlight relevant areas of expertise and fit with current research themes. Emails from work email address are acceptable.		

I can confirm that I meet the criteria for an Integrated Clinical Academic Pre-doctoral Bridging Award and I have submitted all of the evidence described above.

I understand that, if successful, a confirmation letter from my organisation of management support and financial plans will be required prior to the provision of funding.

Signed (applicant): **Date:**

Appendix 2: Writing a sound application

You have the opportunity to develop a bespoke development programme tailored to suit your specific needs and aspirations with your identified clinical academic supervisor. The elements of your programme should be designed to help you to develop your knowledge and understanding of research, acquire practical research skills, and develop a project idea with supervisory guidance and support. In addition, you may plan to participate in other activities such as working with established researchers/clinical research teams, visiting clinical research facilities, and/or attending research presentations and seminars. Overall, in your application, aim to be clear about what you plan to do and show how the planned programme of work will help you progress as a clinical/practitioner academic and provide a suitable foundation for future training and development applications such as HEE-NIHR DCAF scheme.

Your application will be assessed using the following criteria:

- clear commitment to apply for HEE-NIHR ICA DCAF programme or equivalent to pursue a career as a clinical academic
- quality and relevance of the applicant's recent and overall professional and research experience
- the appropriateness of planned activities to enhance the applicant's experience and profile
- the appropriateness of the planned activities to develop the research project as a PhD programme
- the suitability of the research programme for HEE-NIHR funding and the potential for impact on quality of patient care
- demonstration of suitable Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) with awareness of inclusivity issues
- the arrangements for support of the applicant to undertake the award from clinical and academic organisations

	<i>What goes wrong?</i>	<i>What do good applications have?</i>
Areas of interest, activities, and outcomes	Applications which give limited information about the research topic and/or does not clearly identify activities and outcomes that will advance development of a doctoral programme will score less well. A research topic that does not align to HEE/NIHR remit will also be of lower priority.	A strong application will provide a clear justification for the area of research and explain the activities and outcomes that will help to advance development of a doctoral application. It is written with feeling and is persuasive about the importance of the area of interest.
Personal development plans	A weaker application tends to read as if there is partial understanding of or lack of commitment to a clinical academic career or completing doctoral studies. It is not clear about the outcomes that will help to develop their research profile.	It is evident that the applicant is actively pursuing a clinical/practitioner academic career and utilising all opportunities to develop research knowledge, skills, and experience to strengthen a future application. The best applicants will have a growing research profile, consistent with a competitive application for a DCAF award.

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<p>PPIE & Potential impact</p>	<p>Limited information that shows awareness of the importance of PPIE and inclusivity issues in research or applications that do not explain what the potential benefits or impact could be for those receiving care tend to score less well.</p>	<p>A strong application shows understanding of PPIE and inclusivity issue and where appropriate, has plans for PPIE. It explains what the potential impact is for patients/service users or the service.</p>
<p>Spending plan and timetable</p>	<p>Limited details are provided.</p>	<p>A good application gives a detailed plan with justification for the costs and a timeline for the key activities of the programme. Applications that appear to be realistic, achievable, and feasible, and offer effective use of funds tend to do better.</p>
<p>Letters of Support</p>	<p>Letters are generic or vague about the application and the support that will be provided raise some doubts about sustained support.</p> <p>NB: Key judgements are not based on this aspect of the application.</p>	<p>A sound letter from the supervisor explains the support that will be provided and the appropriateness of the support for the area of interest. A sound letter from the line manager/employer explains the support for the area of interest and it's relevance to the service/practice and commitment to the ongoing development of the applicant.</p>
<p>The overall quality of the application</p>	<p>Applications tend to score less well where they do not comply with the word counts that are given (either too long or too short) or where the statement letter does not address the areas identified on the checklist or where the application is not structured and therefore can be harder to follow.</p>	<p>A good application is complete, well presented, and readable. It keeps to the correct length and complies with word counts; it is concise yet provides sufficient detail and background to enable a reader who does not work in their field to understand the area of interest. It uses current policy or research, providing references, to justify the proposed work.</p>