

HEE/NIHR ICA Programme Bridging Schemes National Framework

March 2018

Background

As part of the changes being taken forward following NIHR's Strategic Review of Training and feedback to both HEE and NIHR, a bridging scheme is being introduced to support individuals in ICA eligible professions who have completed or are about to complete a PhD and who are looking to undertake a post-doctoral level fellowship such as the ICA Clinical Lectureship. Pre-doctoral level bridging will also be provided for, but given the recently developed ICA Pre-Doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship, the main focus of the scheme will be on post-doctoral level support.

This framework sets out guidance for how the scheme will work and provides parameters within which local HEE teams will manage the scheme.

A locally run bridging scheme

Local HEE teams will run the bridging scheme(s) in addition to the schemes already in place for internships. Some local HEE teams are already offering bridging schemes for various stages of a clinical academic pathway; the aim of this framework is to ensure consistent support is available in all HEE regions.

A number of key parameters and principles for the bridging scheme are listed below. Locally run schemes will be required to address these and report back periodically to HEE and NIHR. A key element of reporting will be what individuals have gone on to do following the conclusion of their bridging support in order to evaluate the benefits of the scheme.

Key parameters

- Schemes will be locally run with central oversight from HEE via the same mechanism as the current internship programme.
- Providers of local schemes will be required to report regularly to HEE and NIHR on recruitment and progression of awardees. Updates on the schemes will also form a standing agenda item on the quarterly HEE Research Network meetings to share risks, issues and best practice.
- The first year of the scheme will be subject to an evaluation and any necessary modifications introduced in the following years.
- Success rates of the scheme will be regularly monitored and local/regional schemes benchmarked against national expectations.
- Schemes will be nationally badged e.g. 'ICA Bridging scheme' and awardees will become members of the NIHR Academy.
- Local schemes will link with and make use of local NIHR Research Design Services.
- Schemes should support individuals for up to 12 months, in the case of post-doctoral awardees, and for up to 6 months in the case of pre-doctoral awardees.
- The funding must be used to develop an individually tailored programme to support the development of a doctoral or post-doctoral fellowship application.

- Possible eligible costs would include salary backfill (for time to develop the application and peruse academic activities related to their application, including publishing/networking), training modules, travel and access to high quality academic mentorship.

Guidance is provided below in terms of local scheme requirements and eligibility criteria, but flexibility is encouraged. A particular focus should be given to the doctoral – post doctoral transition but there is local flexibility to use funds for pre-doctoral support and in other ways providing it is used to support and advance the careers of aspiring clinical academics eligible for the ICA programme. In all cases, the individuals the scheme has supported will need to be identified to HEE and NIHR through a reporting process which will be confirmed to local HEE teams in due course.

Local scheme content requirements

Post-doctoral support

- Provide support for up to 12 months which should be flexible in terms of WTE to accommodate applicants' needs, and taking account of the need to balance clinical service and academic training and development.
- Training and support for individuals on the scheme should be trainee led and bespoke to the needs of trainees. This could include, but isn't limited to;
 - formal courses,
 - visits to other centres,
 - personal coaching and mentorship,
 - informal learning and access to relevant workshops.
 All of which should support the individual in applying for further post-doctoral level fellowship funding to progress their clinical academic career.
- Trainees should be supported through their organisation(s) both in their clinical and academic development, via access to a suitable mentor.

Pre-doctoral support

- Provide support for up to 6 months, which should be flexible in terms of WTE to accommodate applicants' needs.
- Tailored support to allow award holders to develop a PhD application. This could include, but is not limited to:
 - refining a research question with methods, PPI plans and funding requirements outlined;
 - a literature review as first author;
 - engagement with the wider research network e.g. second author on a research paper; and
 - 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.

Local teams should also review the [PCAF guidance notes](#) for suitable course content for this level of bridging support.

Eligibility criteria

- Registered with the relevant professional body as per ICA programme requirements (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/documents/ICA/TCC-ICA-Eligible-Professions-and-Registration-Bodies.pdf>)
- Applicants must be employed by a provider of health and/or care services that is providing at least 50% of its services free at the point of delivery. The applicant must also be spending at least 50% of their current role delivering health and/or care services which are free at the point of delivery.
- For pre-doctoral bridging support, applicants must hold a Master's level qualification (or evidence of postgraduate study at Level 7).
- For post-doctoral bridging support applicants must hold a relevant PhD*, or have submitted their thesis for examination at the time of application. Applicants must have been awarded their PhD/Prof Doctorate by the time they start.
- For the post-doctoral bridging support, being a current or previous ICA, Clinical Academic Training (CAT) or Healthcare Science (HCS) award holder is desirable but not essential.

* Professional Doctorate graduates are eligible (as with the ICA Programme as a whole), providing they can evidence the quality and proportionality of research education, training and experience gained within their Higher Education Institution. Eligibility criteria are on the [ICA page](#) of HEE's website.

This framework will be reviewed at regular points, to take into account feedback from the first cohort of bridging award holders.