

ICA

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



HEE/NIHR Pre-doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship Scheme

Round 1 (2018)

Chairs' Report

Introduction

The ICA Programme supports registered graduate clinicians belonging to the ICA [eligible professions](#) to develop clinical academic careers by providing training awards that combine continued clinical practice and clinical development with clinical research and research leadership.

The HEE/NIHR ICA Pre-doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship (PCAF) funds personalised programmes of academic training that will equip awardees with the skills and experience to access doctoral level funding **and** dedicated time to prepare an application for a competitive, peer-reviewed doctoral level research training fellowship.

PCAF candidates may have received little formal academic training at the point of application, but should be able to demonstrate their commitment to a career as a clinical academic and have outstanding potential for development as a future clinical academic leader.

PCAF Round 1 Competition (2018)

The first PCAF scheme competition launched on the 1st February 2018 and closed on the 11th April 2018. The numbers of applications received and awards made are detailed in **Annex A** at the end of this document. Each eligible application was assessed by two members of the [ICA PCAF Review Panel](#).

The PCAF Review Panel met on the 5th July 2018 to discuss the Round 1 applications and to make recommendations for funding. In addition, the panel made observations of the general strengths and weaknesses of the Round 1 applications and discussed areas that future applicants should consider in order to strengthen their applications. These are summarised below.

PCAF Round 1 Panel Observations and Advice for Prospective Applicants

The Panel agreed that the Round 1 competition was highly competitive and the amount of interest in the scheme was seen as a positive reflection on the increasing support and awareness of non-medical clinical academic careers.

Research and Clinical Experience

As part of their assessment, the Panel considered “the suitability and commitment of the applicant to a career as a clinical academic”.

Applicants are advised to clearly describe the relevant clinical and academic skills and experience they have developed to date. In addition to supporting the Panel’s assessment of the applicant’s clinical academic career potential, this detail contextualises the training and development proposal and supports the justification provided for the training proposed.

There is an opportunity for applicants to detail both their relevant clinical and academic experience in the CV section of the application form (“present and previous positions”) and in response to the question “Please describe your research career to date” (which, for this scheme, would incorporate clinical academic career experience).

Prospective applicants with negligible research experience to date and/ or limited links with research groups may wish to consider whether an [ICA Internship](#) may be an appropriate first step in their clinical academic career.

ICA Internships are available annually and run for six months. They provide a range of both taught and academically supervised training opportunities that engage and expose the intern to the clinical academic research environment, and provide them with the practical skills to undertake a research project supported by an expert clinical academic supervisor.

The funding for ICA Internships is managed by HEE's local teams. Any queries regarding the Internship opportunities should be directed to the appropriate [local contact](#).

Proposed Training and Development Programme

The training proposed for a PCAF award **must** be tailored around the applicant's demonstrable training needs, taking into account their previous formal academic training experience and their previous research experience and the research area in which they wish to develop their clinical academic career.

Applicants **must** detail in their application how the proposed training plan will support their development as a clinical academic, how it meets their unique training needs and how the training plan will support the development of a competitive doctoral fellowship application.

The training may include, but is not limited to:

- formal courses (including Masters modules)
- training in specialist skills and research methodologies
- placements with other research groups or centres
- leadership training
- conference attendance
- research visits
- Patient and Public Involvement
- Dissemination of relevant research undertaken by the applicant

It is also possible to build in research activities as part of the training and development programme in order to build up experience of undertaking research, although applicants should be mindful that the award itself does not fund research costs, just the training and development costs outlined in the Applicant Guidance Notes.

The completion of a formal academic qualification, such as a Master's degree, can be supported as part of the training plan if appropriate to the developmental needs of the applicant.

In addition, candidates are advised to consider the following:

- **Research Area**

At the pre-doctoral fellowship level, applicants are not expected to have a fully developed PhD proposal (this will be an output of the award), however, applicants do need to have a clear idea of the research area in which they will be developing their clinical academic career (and therefore their doctoral fellowship proposal). The research area will inform the proposed training plan and the proposed supervisory team and should align with the applicant's clinical work. If the applicant's current clinical work does not align with their

area of research interest, the applicant will need to clearly demonstrate how they will work towards such alignment to support a competitive doctoral fellowship application.

- **Applicants who have completed a Masters and/or do not require further formal academic training before submitting a doctoral fellowship application**

Applicants who have undertaken a Masters qualification and/or applicants who require no further formal academic training are welcome to apply for a PCAF, however, such applicants need to clearly demonstrate to the panel why the further training and/ or development proposed is necessary before submitting a doctoral fellowship application. These awards are designed to support applicants who are on a trajectory to become a clinical academic leader in their field and prospective applicants are advised to consider carefully both the benefits and any potential risks of delaying the submission of a doctoral fellowship application.

Such applicants are advised to consider what a realistic timeline would be, and the resource required, before they would be ready to submit a doctoral fellowship application and may wish to consider whether alternative shorter term funding may be more appropriate to them (see below).

The panel need to ensure that the funding available through the PCAF is awarded to those who are most appropriate for this scheme. Applicants that the panel consider potentially competitive doctoral fellowship applicants who do not clearly justify the decision to undertake a PCAF may be unsuccessful even if their proposed training and support are strong.

ICA Programme Bridging Scheme

The ICA Bridging Scheme supports non-medical clinical academics to build on their previous academic training and to develop proposals for a doctoral or post-doctoral award, and to take the next step on their clinical academic pathway.

Information on the bridging support in your region is available through the [Health Education England Clinical Academic Careers webpages](#).

- **Doctoral Fellowship Development**

At the end of a PCAF award, applicants should be in a position to submit a competitive doctoral fellowship application. Applicants are advised to develop their PCAF training proposal with this in mind, identifying any areas of weakness that need to be addressed over the course of the award. Candidates may wish to consider, for example, training and development that will support Patient and Public Involvement in their PhD research project, ways to develop further relevant research experience and ways to strengthen their publication record. Applicants are also advised to clearly articulate in their application how the proposed training will support a competitive doctoral fellowship application at the end of the award and to provide a clear timeline for accomplishing this goal.

- **Scale and Scope**

PCAF awardees are required to complete the training plan as described in their application and to develop a doctoral fellowship proposal over the course of their award. Applicants

are advised to consider carefully the amount of formal training proposed and the feasibility of undertaking this training in addition to the development of a doctoral fellowship proposal.

Supervisors

The choice of supervisor(s) must be clearly justified in the application and applicants are advised to consider the supervisory team for their PCAF proposal carefully. Areas for consideration:

- Availability of the supervisor/ time commitment required from the supervisor
- Fit of the supervisor's expertise with the stated area of research that the applicant is developing their research career within
- Record of conversion of Masters to PhD students.

Statement of Support

PCAF applicants must include a statement of support from the host organisation as part of their application. The statement should detail the experience of the organisation in supporting Masters students to progress to doctoral level research and the organisation's support for non-medical clinical academic careers. The statement must also clearly describe how the institution will support the applicant and **must** be tailored to the applicant.

Changes for PCAF Round 2 (2019)

Following the completion of the Round 1 PCAF competition, the HEE/NIHR ICA Oversight group has agreed the following changes to the scheme, which will be incorporated from the Round 2 competition:

- Applicants can request up to 20% clinical development time paid for through the award. This would constitute part of the 50% academic training time.
- Applicants can opt for a 12 months award, undertaking the academic training full time (as above 20% of this could be clinical development).

Useful Resource for Prospective Applicants

- The [Round 1 \(2018\) PCAF Applicant Guidance Notes](#) are available from the ICA webpages. These provide full details of the PCAF scheme, including the eligibility requirements, the funding available, the required employment arrangements and the assessment criteria used by the PCAF Panel when reviewing applications. The Applicant Guidance Notes should be read in full before starting an application

Please note – Updated Guidance Notes will be published with the launch of the Round 2 competition. Applicants **must** ensure that they are referring to the most recent Applicant Guidance Notes when making an application.

- The ICA PCAF [Frequently Asked Questions](#) answers common questions from prospective applicants.

- The [ICA Eligible Professions and Regulators](#) are available via the ICA webpages.
- The [Building a Research Career Handbook](#) has been designed to support aspiring clinical academics and their managers to make the most of the funding opportunities available and to help clinicians who are interested in becoming involved in research but do not know where to begin.
- The Applicants Guidance Notes for the [HEE/NIHR ICA Clinical Doctoral Research Fellowship](#) and the [NIHR Doctoral Research Fellowship](#) schemes are also available via the NIHR webpages. The guidance details the questions on the doctoral fellowship application form and the eligibility requirements for the scheme.
- [Current and Previous NIHR training award holders](#) are listed on the NIHR webpages and may be a useful resource for prospective applicants wishing to link in with other non-medical clinical academics.
- [The NIHR Training Advocates](#) are ambassadors for non-medical clinical academic careers and offer support to individuals beginning or continuing a research careers.

Annex A

PCAF Round 1 Summary

	Number of Applications
Submitted	146
Eligible Submitted	145
Considered at the Funding Recommendation Meeting	144*
Recommended for Funding	85
Funded	40
Success Rate	28%

*1 applicant withdrew prior to the Funding Recommendation meeting

PCAF Round 1 Applications by Region

Region	% of Total Eligible Applications	% of Total Funded Applications
East Midlands	6.9	7.5
East of England	4.9	0
London	26.4	37.5
North East	4.9	10
North West	7.6	2.5
South Central	6.9	5
South East Coast	9.7	2.5
South West	7.6	2.5
West Midlands	7.6	12.5
Yorkshire and the Humber	17.4	20

PCAF Round 1 Applications by Profession

	% of Total Eligible Applications	% of Total Funded Applications
Dental Therapist	0.7	2.5
Dietician	5.6	2.5
Healthcare Scientist	0.7	0
Midwife	6.9	12.5
Non-Medical public Health	1.4	0
Nurse	26.4	17.5
Occupational Therapist	6.9	10
Operating Department Practitioner	0.7	0
Other	0.7	0
Orthoptist	0.7	0
Paramedic	0.7	0
Pharmacist	5.6	5
Physiotherapist	23.6	25
Podiatrist	2.1	0
Practitioner Psychologist	0.7	0
Radiographer (diagnostic)	4.2	2.5
Speech and Language Therapist	12.5	22.5