

Academic Clinical Fellowship Handbook

Edge Hill University 

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Academic Clinical Fellowship Programme

Welcome to the NIHR Integrated Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) Programme at Edge Hill University. We are thrilled that you have selected our programme for the next stage of your clinical and academic development. As an Academic Clinical Fellow, you are employed by NHS England, with clinical placements, rotations, and progress overseen by NHSE, not the university. However, Edge Hill University and NHSE work closely together to provide you with a tailored, high-quality educational experience.

The ICAT team is dedicated to ensuring you get the most out of this opportunity, and we are here to support and guide you every step of the way.

More information can be found on our website:

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/healthresearchinstitute/integrated-clinical-academic-training-office/>

We in the ICAT team are committed to helping you succeed and reach your full potential. Our goal is to support you in securing successful Fellowship applications, paving the way for you to pursue a cutting-edge PhD in your chosen field. To this end, you will also engage closely with the Faculty Fellowship Academy from the very beginning of your journey.

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/healthresearchinstitute/integrated-clinical-academic-training-office/academic-fellowships/>

You can contact the ICAT office at icato@edgehill.ac.uk should you have any queries.

Introduction

The NIHR Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF) is a clinical specialty training post in medicine or dentistry that incorporates academic training.

This post has a standard duration of 3 years (up to 4 years for GPs). Alternatively, it can be taken part-time and extended up to a maximum of 5 years (or 6 years for GPs), as long as the academic component remains at 25% whole time equivalent.

You will have access to Master's-level research training to develop your academic skills and equip you to balance your clinical academic career.

As an ACF you will spend:

- 75% of your time in specialist clinical training
- 25% of your time in research or educationalist training.

To be eligible for an ACF you must be:

- Medically or dentally qualified
- At the early stages of speciality training
- Able to demonstrate outstanding potential for a career as a clinical academic
- Able to meet the clinical specification for the advertised post.

NIHR Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF) posts are allocated annually to Integrated Academic Training (IAT) partnerships comprising an NHS England (NHSE) local office, Higher Education Institute (HEI), and NHS organisation.

NIHR Academy

The NIHR Academy oversees the development and coordination of NIHR academic training, career development, and research capacity building. It plays a crucial role in attracting, training, and supporting top health and care researchers to address the complex challenges of the future. The training and career development awards offered by the academy complement NIHR's additional investments in world-class research facilities and a highly skilled research workforce.

For more information, please visit <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do>

Occupational Health

ACFs will undergo health screening as part of their contract, managed by the lead employer (NHSE).

Academic Time Allocation

25% of your time must be spent on research or educationalist training. Academic training time must fit in with your clinical rotas, as well as the academic department where you are based.

ACFs tend to find that allocating blocks of time are more productive than allocating individual days each week. For lab-based work, allocating blocks of time are usually vital. This should be discussed with your supervisor(s) to ensure the most productive split, while ensuring clinical work is unaffected.

GP ACF Trainees – Training Pathway

The ACF programme extends standard GP training by an additional year to provide dedicated time for academic work. This extra time is spread across the four years but is primarily focused in the final two years. Throughout the programme, you will need to meet GP training requirements, including passing the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) and exams. While you have some flexibility in scheduling your MRCGP exams, we offer recommendations based on the experiences of previous GP ACFs.

- In ST1, GP ACFs complete full-time clinical training with no allocated academic time.
- In ST2, GP ACFs undergo two 6-month integrated training posts. Over this 12-month period, you must complete 6 months of GP training, which equates to 7 clinical sessions per week for 6 months, as per standard GP training requirements. You may also engage in some additional academic work during ST2, provided you allocate sufficient time in your final two years to ensure a total of three years of clinical training and one year of academic training by the end of the programme.
- In ST3/4, GP ACFs balance clinical and academic work across the two years based on individual needs, in consultation with their educational and academic supervisors. Over these 24 months, you are required to complete 12 months of GP training, which equates to 7 clinical sessions per week for 12 months, in line with standard GP training requirements.

The latest exam requirements can be found here <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/mrcgp-exams>

To complete the MRCGP and training, you must pass two exams: the Applied Knowledge Test (AKT) and the Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA). The AKT is a multiple-choice exam typically taken in ST2 or ST3, while the CSA, an OSCE-style exam, is usually completed in ST3 or ST4. The timing of these exams should be based on your readiness and discussed with both your academic and clinical educational supervisors. We highly recommend attending the ST3 Study Release Course (SRC) in the year you plan to take the CSA. Completing the CSA in ST3 can free up more time for research in ST4, but it's important to ensure your consultation skills are well-prepared and align with your overall goals for ST3 and ST4.

NIHR Bursary

The NIHR bursary offers all ACF trainees funding to attend and/or present their research at external meetings and conferences relevant to their academic training. Edge Hill University's ICAT team oversees the bursary fund, providing £1,000 per financial year (August to July) per trainee, and is responsible for approving expenditures against these funds. Trainees are encouraged to maintain a log of their expenses and study leave time.

Unclaimed bursary funds at the end of each financial year will be retained by the medical school for activities that support the academic development or training of NIHR ACF trainees.

To claim bursary funds, please use this form - [ACF Fees Claim Form - Edge Hill University](#) and return it to icato@edgehill.ac.uk along with any associated receipts.

Eligible expenses include:

- Up to £1,000 for costs incurred during the trainee year. Expenses are reimbursable only on the date of the event; for example, a train ticket purchased in advance can be reimbursed only after it has been used.
 - Up to 10% of the bursary can be allocated to Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE).
- A £4,500 allowance over the course of the programme is also available to fund the cost of course fees related to research needs.

NB: A trainee year spans the 12 months following a trainee's start date. For instance, if a trainee begins on 1 August, their trainee year runs from 1 August to 31 July.

The bursary does not cover clinical courses, including revision courses, consumables, equipment, laptops, or books. It is intended solely for academic courses and conferences, including associated travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs.

Research Training Programme

The most complete package for research training is our Master by Research (MRes) programme, which is undertaken over the course of 1 year, or 18 months part-time.

This programme develops essential foundations for progression to PhD study and an academic career. Covering practical and theoretical aspects, the focus is on knowledge and skills to design, conduct, evaluate and disseminate research.

All ACFs must attend the research training programme (RTP) provided by Edge Hill University, with the purpose being to provide generic research training. Compulsory research training covers research design, data and project management. Ethics, values and equality are also considered. Students select further sessions on methodology in the sciences, social sciences, or arts and humanities.

Research projects are supervised by postdoctoral academic supervisors from the hosting faculty selected by the postgraduate tutor and approved by the Graduate School.

For more information, please visit the MRes programme website at:

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/course/mres/>

Honorary Contracts

Following completion of the relevant form, ID & right to work checks, ACFs will be issued with an Honorary Clinical Fellow Contract. During the fellowship, ACFs will complete an original research project, and the honorary contract will enable ACFs to attend valuable research-related support and development sessions facilitated by the Research Office, Health Research Institute, Faculties, and Library & Learning Services. This presents excellent opportunities to link up directly with experienced professors, researchers and academics within EHU and access to administrative support and guidance via the ICAT office.

Individuals participating in the ACF programme will have full access to University and FHSCM Research Office regular methodological and research development sessions and support, such as statistics, open research, and research ethics. Learning Services within the £27 million Catalyst Centre run UniSkills, a package of workshops, online resources and face-to-face support to develop essential academic skills; house a wide range of e-journals and books, offering one-to-one academic support sessions. ACFs have access to university IT services with software applications. The HRI manages access to NHS data sets and students will have data security and protection needs assessment and training. There are services offering mental health and inclusion support.

Mentoring & Coaching

Mentorship is provided through our established FHSCM research mentorship programme which provides 1-to-1 mentoring with a named senior postdoctoral academic. More information can be found on our [website](#).

Coaching opportunities are available through our [HRI research centres](#):

- [Arts & Wellbeing](#)
- [EPIC](#)
- [iCARE](#)

If you would like to learn more, please contact the relevant research centre.

There is also an NIHR mentoring programme that ACFs can join. More information on this can be found on the NIHR website - <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/nihr-academy/benefits/mentoring-programme>

Specialised Foundation Mentoring Scheme

Edge Hill University has an established SFP mentoring scheme, which follows the principles of near-peer mentoring. This scheme is available for all ACFs to participate in and offers the opportunity to develop your mentoring skills.

This hugely rewarding role provides ACFs with an opportunity for development of the important skill of mentoring. Mentors can attend an optional training session on mentorship and sign up to the mentoring register. The expectation is to meet mentees 2-3 times per year over a two-year period of foundation training. This will hopefully be in the same specialty, but this may not always be possible. A certificate to recognise participation in this scheme will be provided.

If you would like more info on this scheme, please contact the ICAT office.

Research, Training and Information Sessions

A series of different workshops and seminars run throughout the year which are open to ACFs. These include the below:

HRI Think Tanks:

These run monthly and act as a forum for supporting the development of research funding applications. This may take the form of preliminary conversations in response to horizon scanning future funding calls, a discussion about team composition for research bids, feedback on outline proposals, or other issues related to research funding and planning. It offers an opportunity for an informal chat with experienced researchers and colleagues from different disciplines, bringing expertise from a range of perspectives to support robust research proposals. Please contact healthresearchinstitute@edgehill.ac.uk for more information.

Faculty Breakfast Research Seminars:

Faculty Breakfast Research Seminars run each month as informal 30 minute talks with an additional 15 minutes designated for Q&A, and are open to all students and staff who wish to learn more about research. These run as either hybrid meetings or purely online via MS Teams.

There are also regular ad hoc meetings that are ran by the faculty, the HRI and its associated research centres. More information can be found on the EHU HRI webpage -

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/healthresearchinstitute/>

Please contact fhscmresearch@edgehill.ac.uk for more information.

Professional Development:

Edge Hill is a leading university in the UK for professional development. Our portfolio of courses offers many opportunities for those working, or seeking to work, in education or health and social care to develop and enhance their knowledge and skills and keep up to date with the latest developments in their specialist area.

Many of our professional development programmes enable you to construct a programme to suit you or allow you to study individual modules as required.

More information can be found on our professional development webpage:

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/study/professional-development/>

NIHR Academy Members Conference:

The NIHR holds an annual Academy Members Conference that you may wish to attend.

Details of NIHR upcoming events can be found [here](#)

Researcher Development Programme:

The Researcher Development Programme (RDP) is based on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF). The following sessions are available to ACFs, under each of the four RDF quadrants:

- Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities
- Personal Effectiveness
- Research Governance and Organisation
- Engagement, Influence and Impact

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/departments/support/graduateschool/>

Library & Learning Services – Research Development Sessions:

We aim to help develop and improve the University's research culture, specifically with regards to open research, and align our work to the [Research Strategy - Edge Hill University](#). We offer [Researcher Development Sessions](#) which aim to support staff working through the research and publication journey.

[Training for Researchers: Toolkit](#) by Library & Learning Services

Monitoring of Clinical Progress

Clinical progress is monitored by the Northwest Deanery through an Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP). This is the formal review of progress that all trainees are required to have for every year they are in training, whether working full or part-time.

Monitoring of Academic Progress

Academic progress monitoring is handled by your ACF supervisor and the ACF programme lead. Progress is measured by the completion of progress forms, which can be found on the EHU website here [ACF resources - Edge Hill University](#) as well as at the end of this handbook. Completed forms should be submitted to the ICAT office at icato@edgehill.ac.uk

These forms will be reviewed by the ICAT team to assess academic progress, and a recommendation will be made to the ARCP panel. At the ARCP, a panel will consider academic progress alongside the clinical assessment. These completed forms need to be added to your portfolio at least one week ahead of your ARCP so they can be seen at the time of your panel.

Role of the ACF Advisor

Where appropriate, in addition to support through your Academic Programme Lead and Academic Supervisor, having an academic advisor can provide further support with your training and career development.

Your advisor is usually someone outside of the supervisory team who can offer independent advice and guidance as well as ensuring you remain on track throughout your programme. An ACF would normally retain the same Advisor throughout their training, but it should be recognised that some flexibility might be beneficial or indeed necessary. ACFs are free to request a change of advisor at any time, however, to establish a meaningful relationship between advisor and advisee, it is deemed appropriate that ACF Advisors would be assigned for a minimum of one academic year.

The ACF advisor will be expected to periodically meet with their advisees to ensure that:

- An appropriate project and supervisor have been identified early
- To advise and encourage a process from the outset leading to the ACF being ready to submit a PhD Fellowship application
- To help the ACF overcome any difficulties that arise
- To identify the most appropriate aspects of the ACF training programme to enable each ACF to achieve their necessary competencies:
 - This may be by undertaking a master's degree (e.g. MRes) or standalone CPD modules that deliver the ACFs personal training needs mapped onto the NIHR curriculum
 - Or by setting annualised learning and training objectives
- To facilitate the ACFs active engagement in wider training opportunities

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Former EHU Vice-chancellor Dr John Cater:

"Our principles of inclusivity run as threads throughout everything we do, fostering a sense of belonging and creating an environment where all people are valued for who they are."

These principles are crucial in supporting our culture as a university; they are also integral to delivering successful research, innovation and teaching.

Our Strategic Action Plan brings together a great deal of work by many colleagues across the institution. We will continue our commitment to raising awareness of inequalities and to tackling them, ensuring our principles of inclusion are evident to everyone.

Through active listening to our students, staff and alumni, we will take positive action to continue to make our community one to which we all proudly belong."

Edge Hill University EDI strategy and goals - [Edge Hill University - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Strategy & Goals](#)

University EDI Department Webpage - [Edge Hill University EDI Webpage](#)

Upcoming events: [EHU Inclusion, Diversity and Identity Research Network and upcoming events](#)

Promoting EDI at Edge Hill University & our EDI ambassadors: [Getting involved with EDI at Edge Hill University](#)

Faith and community: [EHU Faith and Community Network](#)

Peer Support

Edge Hill has a newly established Research Academic Society (RAS), which includes ACFs from EHU and UCLAN, as well as NIHR funded intercalation degree and internship (IDI) students. The aim of the RAS is to provide a vibrant research, teaching and learning space forum open to:

- Host an annual event to showcase internships and intercalation programme opportunities, work in progress and completed projects, and hear directly from students about their experiences on the IDI programmes. This will also include presentations from ACFs and pre/post doc NIHR fellows from EHU & UCLan, external keynote speakers on research and academic careers, and the option for oral and poster presentations.
- Host online seminars and face-to-face events on a variety of topics and research methodologies
- Build a critical mass of students and trainees who can contribute to their own research/academic network
- Access expert speakers from UCLan, EHU and external organisations including clinicians at various points on their academic pathway
- Play a pivotal role in preparing medical students and trainees for the next steps, e.g. MBChB students to be aware of and prepare for the Specialist Foundation Academic Programme in collaboration with NHSE NW, ACF and pre and postdoctoral fellows.
- Collaborate with and support engagement of other health professional students and research students and fellows in other health disciplines to foster interprofessional perspectives in research and academic careers.

Annual ACF Monitoring and Progression

All ACFs hold regular informal meetings with their Academic Programme Lead (APL) and Training Programme Director (TPD).

Additionally, formal, documented meetings are required to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress for the Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP).

It is the responsibility of each ACF to schedule these academic progress meetings with the relevant individuals well in advance. Be sure to document the meetings using the appropriate form. Below is a summary of the formal meetings:

Induction

When: 1st year, September | **With:** ACF lead

- ACF programme introduction, RTP & mentoring
- Monitoring procedures & ACF advisors

Project Planning Meeting

When: 1st year, September/October | **With:** ACF advisor & supervisor

- 1st year planning
- Identify your supervisor
- Project discussion
- Discussion about training (MRes/portfolio of CPD)

Meeting With Advisor

When: 1st year, October | **With:** ACF advisor

- Plan for academic skills training
- Generic academic competencies

Project Progress Meeting

When: Yearly, April/May | **With:** ACF supervisor/APL/ACF advisor

- Prepare for academic ARCP
- Project progress – outputs (abstracts, presentations, papers), skills obtained
- PhD project planning

Progress Forms

Each formal meeting has a progress form to be completed to document the meeting. These forms are available in the [ACF resources - Edge Hill University](#) section of the EHU website

