

Rough Guide to the Academic Foundation Programme

(3rd Edition, July 2020)

The information contained in this Rough Guide is intended for medical students and foundation doctors considering an academic career. Academic supervisors may also find this resource useful.

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Foreword

A long, long time ago, in a hospital far away, I was as a newly qualified doctor, with ambitions of publishing papers and impressing everyone. After some initial spectacular (and in hindsight perhaps lucky) success, there were the inevitable years of writers' block. Clinical work, onerous on-call rotas, postgraduate examinations and life in general, intervened. Most ideas went, after more or less deliberation, on to the 'too difficult' pile.

Years later, it may have been YouTube, which had just been invented, I happened across a recording of Steve Jobs giving a now famous graduation speech. Often a divisive figure, but whatever else you say about him, he did achieve a few things. He used aspects of his own life and career experiences. The speech was quite long, as these things often are, including instances of serendipity, fate, chance and other things. The one piece of career advice I came away with, was based on the wisdom of succeeding best in areas you are passionate about. I am paraphrasing him here, but he basically said "Find what you love and do that".

As a consultant, discovering my niche in medical education, the writer's block eventually faded, having discovered another major force in life, the awesome power of the doctor-in-training. I have experienced many educational innovations, even started a few, but the best ones have always come from my younger colleagues. As well as practicality, there are lessons there about context, relevance and credibility.

This rough guide has immediate 'face validity', written as it is by doctors-in-training for doctors-in-training. Wisdom is contained from current Foundation doctors and those recently graduating from the system. It will be useful for students, newly qualifying doctors, those who know their academic aspirations, and those who do not yet know. You will see that being a medical academic is not a binary choice. Portfolio careers are now the norm and many doctors combine elements of clinical practice, research, leadership and teaching in numerous different ways. Much valuable 'academic' work is performed by colleagues who would not label themselves as 'academic'. All features of medical career paths depend, of course, on exposure to the right role-models to inspire and advise us.

The Academic Foundation Programme provides a great way to gain experience which will be valuable whatever your career goal. It is flexible enough to provide part of an integrated academic career pathway, if that is what you wish, or whether you simply want to 'dip a toe in the water'. So, look for your niche, collect trusted mentors and role-models around you. Most of all, use this guide to find what you love, and do that.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Baker".

Professor Paul Baker

Chair of Academic Subgroup, Foundation School Directors

United Kingdom Foundation Programme Office



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Welcome from the Editors

Welcome to the third edition of the Rough Guide to the Academic Foundation Programme 2020. Previous editions have been well received, and we acknowledge all the incredible input over the years by former academic foundation doctors, supervisors and the team at UKFPO.

This practical, easy to navigate publication is aimed at anyone interested in the Academic Foundation Programme.

Key target audiences include:

- Medical Students considering an Academic Foundation Programme
- Academic Foundation Doctors
- Foundation Doctors interested in pursuing an academic career
- Academic Foundation Programme Supervisors

The Academic Foundation Programme is an exciting opportunity to develop interests in research, medical education and leadership in a supported learning environment during the first two years of clinical practice. Life after medical school involves a steep learning curve, however it is an incredibly rewarding and exciting time in your medical career.

The Academic Foundation Programme provides dedicated time for focusing on academic work, exploring interests and driving positive changes forward locally, nationally and potentially internationally. Looking ahead to competitive speciality or further academic applications (these come around quickly!), protected opportunities for building your academic portfolio may also support future successes.

If this interests you, then we would strongly advise you to consider applying to the Academic Foundation Programme – read on to find out more information!

We hope you find this guide useful and welcome any comments to helpdesk@foundationprogramme.nhs.uk.

Dr Amarit Gill and Dr Owen Davies

Leadership Fellows 2019-2020

United Kingdom Foundation Programme Office

Chapter 1

An Overview of the Academic Foundation Programme

What is the Academic Foundation Programme?

The Academic Foundation Programme (AFP) is a fantastic opportunity. Broadly, it helps foundation doctors develop

- research skills; and/or
- teaching skills; and/or
- medical leadership and management capabilities.

These are all enormously useful in a wide range of medical careers.

There are currently around 500 AFPs available each year across the UK.

There is great variety between AFPs, with some focusing on traditional academic pathways such as research and teaching, while others focus on different areas like leadership and management, quality improvement and even health informatics.

All programmes have the same common purpose; they enable foundation doctors to develop their clinical skills whilst simultaneously supporting the development of key skills in other areas of medicine.

How does an AFP differ from the 'standard' Foundation Programme?

Foundation doctors following an AFP have dedicated time set aside for academic activities, the nature of which will depend on the AFP itself.

AFP's vary significantly between foundation schools. Most of the dedicated academic time will be during the second year of foundation training (F2), but some programmes arrange additional activities during the first year (F1). Trainees may have a four-month academic placement in F2, day-release throughout the year, or a combination of the two.

The academic placement may be co-ordinated by a local university. This gives academic foundation doctors access to additional resources such as research methodology, teaching and statistics courses. You may also have access to libraries, electronic journals, computer rooms and other university facilities. Having a university role also offers potential to get formally involved with teaching both clinical and pre-clinical students.

Most foundation doctors organise a project for their academic placement, which forms the focus of the AFP and provides the opportunity to develop and demonstrate academic competences. There is an enormous range of possible projects that you could undertake. You could carry out a lab-based project leading to a scientific publication, or it could be a clinical quality improvement project which leads to better patient care for example. Having time to develop a project, to carry it out and to present the results is also an excellent opportunity. It leads to the development of key capabilities,

the potential to improve patient outcomes, and the enhancement of your CV/portfolio for future job applications.

AFP doctors have a dedicated academic supervisor to oversee academic work and to provide constructive feedback. The academic supervisor will be able to provide advice about academic careers in general, and if they are not an expert in the specific area that interests you, then they will be able to link you with someone who is!

Why should I apply for an AFP?

Here are some reasons why you might want to apply for, and undertake an AFP:

“I want to know more about medical research”

An AFP can help you understand the basis of medical, lab-based, clinical and population-based research. A project, combined with good research methods teaching and good academic supervision will prepare you well for the next step in your academic career.

“I want to become a better medical educator”

You can gain further teaching experience through an AFP and you may be able to take part in a formal teaching course, giving you the skills necessary to start your career in medical education.

“I want to get involved in medical leadership”

There are many AFPs that give you the opportunity to learn about leadership and management in healthcare. Some AFPs will have projects dedicated to the development of these skills; this may be of interest to those aiming for a career in medical management.

“I want more exposure to a particular specialty”

Most AFPs will be associated with one specialty, which may help guide your future career choices by giving you intensive exposure to a specialty. Often there are additional clinical opportunities even during the academic placement for keen and interested AFP doctors.

“I’d like to know whether an academic career is right for me”

Beyond the foundation training programmes there are several higher academic training opportunities, which often involve a competitive application process. Some of these opportunities are outlined in Chapter 4. The realities of conducting research may not be what you are expecting! The AFP provides dedicated time to develop your academic skill set alongside clinical training, exploring whether a career in academia is the right choice for you.

Is an AFP right for you?

Do you have, and can you demonstrate to a panel of interviewers that you possess the following qualities?

A desire to pursue a career that relates to the AFP for which you are applying

You must be able to demonstrate that you understand what the career involves and you should be able to show your interest in this through some of the work you have completed at medical school.

AFPs are competitive and successful candidates often have something on their CV that stands out (e.g. distinctions, prizes, presentations, scientific publications, etc).

An interest in your chosen specialty

Although many AFPs are generic and the specialty itself is not the focus of the programme, it is advantageous if you can show a genuine interest in the academic focus of the programme

Good clinical abilities

AFP trainees are expected to gain all FP curriculum outcomes in reduced time. You therefore need to demonstrate that you have a strong clinical base and that you are committed to actively managing your learning from the moment you start the programme. This will need good organisational skills!

Enthusiasm

Most importantly of all, can you convey your passion for the programme and do you possess a genuine desire to take full advantage of the great opportunity to benefit patient care?

Chapter 2

Applying for the Academic Foundation Programme

Who can apply?

The eligibility criteria for the Foundation Programme and the Academic Foundation Programme (AFP) are the same. All final year UK medical students are therefore eligible to apply. For non-UK applicants and UK applicants who graduated more than two years ago, please refer to the eligibility criteria on the UKFPO website:

www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk.

The application process

Applying for an AFP is a competitive process.

Typically, if you wish to apply for an AFP then you will need to complete an online application form similar to the Foundation Programme application. Within this application form there will be an additional section to demonstrate your motivations for applying and academic achievements to date. This section may contain several questions requiring 'short paragraph' answers. These will vary according to which programme you are applying to. It is worth researching what these questions will be prior to filling in an application, as answers can take some time to prepare and the type or number of questions may end up influencing your programme preference. Before completing an AFP application, ensure you fully understand which programme you are applying for, what the programme offers and what is expected of you.

Top tip: don't leave your application until the last minute!

If your AFP application is unsuccessful, you will automatically be entered into the allocation process for the Foundation Programme. Overall you will submit up to three application forms; one for the Foundation Programme and up to a maximum of two to two different foundation schools for the AFP.

IMPORTANT: The AFP application process is constantly evolving and so we suggest you refer to the UKFPO website for the latest information (www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk).

Choosing a programme

There are two principal ways in which academic programmes vary:

- Academic theme
- Structure of the programme.

Academic theme

Most programmes will have a theme which can generally be grouped into one of four categories:

- Research
- Medical education (including teaching)
- Leadership and management
- Other (for example, informatics).

It is important that you thoroughly investigate the programmes on offer and apply to the programmes that most interest you. There is often little point in applying to a programme that focuses on medical research if your real interest is in developing skills in medical leadership and management.

There may be a degree of flexibility when considering the theme of an AFP.

Here are two scenarios:

Scenario 1: Your career preferences change between applying for the AFP and commencing the post. For example, you may have a themed AFP in surgery and later decide that you are more interested in a different medical specialty. You should speak to your academic supervisor to see if there are any opportunities, which may support this preferred focus.

Scenario 2: You want to apply to a particular school, but they do not offer a programme that fits your area of interest. You should speak to the school in advance and investigate what can be accommodated. There may be flexibility within the programmes but it is advisable to investigate this before the interview!

In general, we would recommend thoroughly researching the posts on offer and applying for those that match your interests. It is also vital that you can demonstrate your interest and passion in the area that the programme offers.

QUESTION: What happens if you get an AFP, which has a particular focus, and you later decide that you want to do a different project?

ANSWER: You should discuss your interests with your academic supervisor. There may be some flexibility. However, even if the specific project does not align with your interests or career ambitions, you will be developing valuable skills.

Structure of the programme

The structure of academic foundation programmes can vary widely. Variation is normally based around the following four areas:

Length of the academic component

Some academic foundation posts cover the whole two years whereas others focus primarily on the F2 year.

A dedicated placement versus an integrated programme

Some programmes have a single academic placement that typically lasts four months whereas others will have academic time spread throughout the two years. These typically still have a dedicated placement but there may also be a day allocated each week during the other placements, for example.

Funding

Some foundation schools will allocate funding for academic foundation doctors. This is very useful for attending meetings/courses/conferences and even for covering costs such as statistics support. There may also be allocated funding for subsidising fees to study postgraduate qualifications such as a PGCert Medical Education or Masters.

Supporting structures

It is also worth checking what support structures are in place for academic foundation doctors. Some foundation schools and universities offer excellent administrative support and well-structured academic mentoring. There may also be dinners and social events, which can be a great way to get to know other academic doctors in training.

Completing the AFP application form

When completing the AFP application form, you must demonstrate your interest in, and aptitude for the programme for which you are applying. Demonstrating academic excellence provides a distinct advantage.

This can be demonstrated through the following:

- Academic papers
- Presentations (particularly if regional, national or international)

Tips for successful form completion:

- Keep your answers concise, specific and complete – avoid making vague statements.
- Do not exceed the word count as anything over this will not be considered.
- Make sure you actually answer the question being asked and not the question that you would like them to ask!
- Use relevant personal examples to demonstrate your skills, interests and abilities.
- Make sure you have demonstrated how you meet every point on the person specification.
- Ask a friend or colleague to proofread your completed form.
- Print a hard copy of the completed application form – you may need to refer to it in your interview.

The interview

The interview structure varies widely depending on which Foundation School you are applying to. During interview preparation, ensure you are well informed about the structure so there are no surprises on the day! This information can usually be found on individual Foundation School websites. Links to these can be found on www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk.

Some general hints and tips are as follows:

Before the interview

- Book an interview slot before the deadline – it can be a tight window so make sure you are aware of key dates.
- Ensure you have fully researched the programme.
- Refresh and make sure you know everything about the research projects that you have already carried out (even if they were years ago!).
- Speak to current academic foundation doctors about their experience of the interview process.
- Arrange practice interviews and research previous interview questions.

During the interview

- Make sure you are on time and dressed appropriately, first impressions count.
- Be prepared to see other candidates, if you are not expecting this it might be intimidating but remember – they are likely to be feeling the same way as you!
- Make sure you answer the question that is being asked.
- Before starting to answer a question take a few seconds to think about the way you are going to structure your response.
- Always try to give a response that is structured and logical.
- If you don't know an answer, say so, but volunteer working it out from first principles.

After the interview

- And relax!
- If you are offered a post, ensure you check your email regularly and are aware of tight deadlines – you may only have 24-48 hours to accept an offer.

Remember, if you are not offered an AFP, or choose to decline, it is not the end of your academic career! There will always be quality improvement projects, research projects, teaching opportunities, course, leadership posts (Mess President? F1 Representative? Captain of the Doctors Football Team?) to immerse yourself in. Throughout your career, nothing stops you from immersing yourself into the world of research, medical education and leadership.

Chapter 3

Making the most out of your academic foundation programme

General advice

Undertaking an AFP provides a great opportunity to become more involved with medical research, education, management and much more. While the structure and content of each individual programme varies, all programmes will provide you with an opportunity to develop your research, teaching and/or leadership skills. More information about the generic outcomes of the Academic Foundation Programme can be found on the UKFPO website (foundationprogramme.nhs.uk).

Making the most of an AFP is much like any project; the more that you put in, the more that you will be able to achieve. Previous foundation doctors who have completed AFPs have published work and/or spoken at national and international conferences. Others have even organised their own conferences to allow people to present and display their work.

There are many different opportunities that can arise from undertaking an AFP. Having protected time as part of the programme is a real benefit and one that should be seen as a huge opportunity to begin to establish yourself as a medical educator, researcher, leader/manager or an expert in any other area.

The advice that follows is by no means exhaustive. The guidance is based on the experiences of supervisors and doctors in training and aims to help you achieve the most from the two-year AFP.

Before the programme begins

Mapping the AFP to your future

Think about where you see yourself in 5, 10, or 15 years' time. Once you have a broad plan or vision, think about how your academic foundation programme can best support these aims. Once you have ordered your thoughts, you are ready to engage with and explore these further with your supervisor.

Liaise with your supervisor

Every AFP requires an academic supervisor. Having someone with experience to guide you is a vital part of the programme. Some programmes will assign you an academic supervisor whereas others will expect you to identify your own academic supervisor as you see appropriate. Where possible, make sure the expertise of your academic supervisor matches your interests.

Your supervisor will be able to point you in the right direction, to give you advice about what has worked (and perhaps what has not) with previous foundation doctors and to explain what they feel you should achieve over the course of the programme.

Importantly, they may also be able to put you in contact with doctors who held the AFP post before you; not only is this useful in terms of advice, tips and pointers but they may well have started on-going projects that you could continue to develop.

Top tip: Some projects may need ethical approval (this process can sometimes take weeks or months) or will end up taking more time than allocated to complete. Contacting your supervisor also means you can iron out any potential difficulties before starting and hit the ground running in your allocated time!

During the programme

Try to achieve something transferable

Aim to publish a paper, present a poster or deliver an oral presentation. Attend events related to your area of interest, for example, academic conferences and skills-based seminars (such as a workshop on how to perform critical appraisal). These activities will help to develop key academic skills and will enable you to network with interesting people within your field. It is also a great way to spread your message and vision. This has two benefits:

1. It means your work may have an impact beyond the confines of your university or local hospital; and
2. It can increase your own personal profile within your area.

Consider additional qualifications

Some institutions offer the opportunity to undertake further associated qualifications; these can be challenging, enjoyable and importantly can increase your chances of securing your next job. In some cases, these qualifications may be funded as part of your programme – it's always worth asking this question!

Teach medical students

Whatever your programme, get involved with teaching medical students. Teaching is a very important skill and is normally very enjoyable. It is also a good way to maintain and indeed develop your own medical knowledge.

Networking

Network with your academic foundation doctor colleagues and academics in the hospital, university and further afield, all who may have similar or different areas of interest. This is an excellent way to find and create new opportunities.

Attend conferences

Presenting at conferences is a fantastic experience yet attending can also be of great benefit to you. These conferences can provide guidance about specific areas within your broad area of interest that are attracting the most funding and they can also help you create links with those individuals and groups who have similar interests. This scenario is not only potentially stimulating, but it can also help with your future career prospects. You could meet a group where you will complete your future PhD, or perhaps meet a service improvement team who has innovative ideas that you could take to your institution.

Top tip: The National Foundation Doctors Presentation Day and the Academic Foundation Programme conferences are great places to start! Check out key dates on the UKFPO website.

Research and utilise available materials to support your academic progression

There is a wealth of information, material and online resources available to support your academic progression. Two organisations which provide a good steer and an abundance of information relevant to research are the Wellcome Trust (www.wellcome.ac.uk) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) (www.nihr.ac.uk).

Join professional organisations

There are a number of professional organisations that may be of interest to you. Joining an organisation will increase both your profile and your chances of meeting likeminded people to discuss and share ideas, to identify new opportunities and to receive advice and support from experts.

Organisations specialising in medical research

As a medical researcher, you may want to consider signing up to the Academy of Medical Sciences (ACMEDSCI) outreach scheme.

Organisations specialising in medical education

There are two key organisations within the world of medical education: the Academy of Medical Educators (AoME) and the Association for the Study of Medical Education (ASME).

ASME is the professional body for those involved with education and has produced professional standards for medical educators. Meeting these standards can allow you to become a member or fellow of the academy, gaining recognition for your experience in education.

AoME supports those involved in medical education and holds regular events and conferences to allow people to present and demonstrate their achievements within medical education. ASME also offer a special interest group which aims to support trainee involvement in teaching - TASME (Trainee Association for the Study of Medical Education).

Both AoME and ASME provide support for medical educators at a junior level with special interest groups that you can join for further help and support.

Organisations specialising in medical management and leadership

If you are interested in medical management and leadership then you may consider joining the Faculty of Medical Management and Leadership (FMLM). The FMLM has some great online resources and organises some excellent networking events (www.fmlm.ac.uk).

Keep on top of things

Remember that you also have the outcomes of the Foundation Programme to achieve, often in less time than your colleagues. Keeping on top of assessments, clinical practice, engagement with the educational process (e.g. completion of work-based supervised learning events etc.) and evidencing all of this within your e-portfolio is vital in ensuring a (relatively) stress free approach to sign off!

Top tip: Be realistic about what you can achieve in the time frame that you have – it's easy to start lots of projects, but can you finish them all, write them up and present them?

Careers management

Throughout the AFP, think about what you want out of your career and the opportunities that may be available and most suited to you. When it comes to successful completion of the AFP and time to consider job applications, apply for the post that is most likely to support your future ambition and long-term career prospects.

Chapter 4

After the Academic Foundation Programme

Post-AFP information

Throughout your AFP you will have been thinking about 'what/where next' for your career. There are many options available, including core and specialist clinical training, medical education, medical management and continuing research opportunities.

Working in research, medical education or management are all highly rewarding career paths with excellent opportunities available. If you are interested in pursuing a career in these fields there are several factors to consider before applying for further academic training posts.

- **Competition:** posts are often competitive so it is essential that your CV/ portfolio highlights why you are suited to your chosen post and what you can bring to the role. You must also demonstrate your commitment to this particular career – why should we appoint you? How do you stand out and how can you demonstrate your passion and enthusiasm for this particular area?
- **Time:** as with the AFP, you will still need to achieve the same clinical outcomes as your peers when following specialty training; this is however easily achievable with a bit of organisation and forward planning!
- **Location:** each region/nation will offer a variety of training programmes and posts, but not all areas offer all specialties; this may mean moving to another location for some of your training. Post-AFP academic training varies between and within the four UK countries.

Academic Programmes

England

The post-Foundation integrated academic training programme in England is co-ordinated by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). NIHR fund approximately 250 Academic Clinical Fellowships (ACFs) and 100 Clinical Lectureships (CLs) per year.

Academic Clinical Fellowships

Duration: Up to three years (four for GP)

Point of entry: Varies ST/CT1 – ST4

These are specialty-training posts where your time is split between specialty clinical work (75%) and research or educational training (25%). This can be divided into placements of time out, for example, three months per year or one to two days per week or an entire nine months dedicated to research (25% of three years). By the end of the ACF post, you should be well placed to make a successful application to a Research Training Fellowship or an educational programme for funding to undertake a MD or a PhD.

There are a wide variety of ACFs on offer in research and medical education. The entry points vary; some are aimed at CT1 trainees, others begin at ST3 or above (note only emergency medicine, psychiatry and paediatrics allow ST4 entry). It is worthwhile looking at each deanery and at the specific posts that interest you to check the eligibility criteria.

Clinical Lectureships

Duration: Up to four years (six years less than full time)

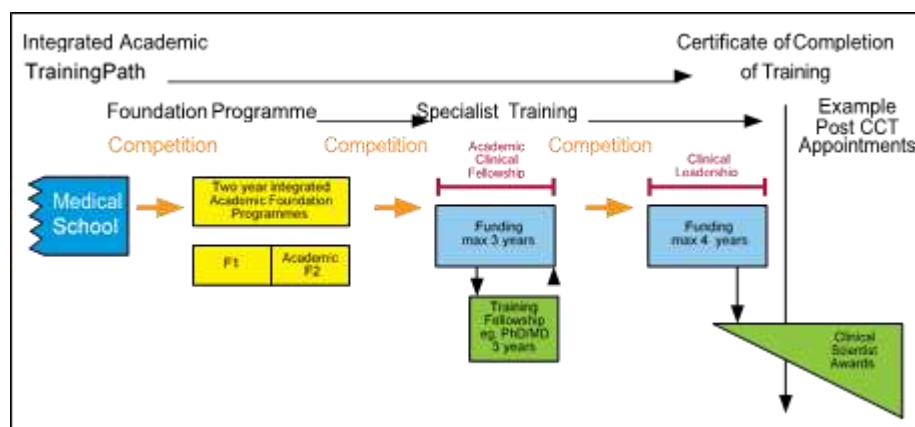
Point of entry: ST3 or above

These are academic posts for doctors in advanced specialty training, ST3 or above, who have already completed a PhD or MD. These posts last up to four years with time divided between clinical (50%) and academic work (50%) to allow trainees to complete clinical training and to pursue postdoctoral research. Like the ACF phase, there is a competitive application process for CLs. If you are unsuccessful in securing a CL or choose not to continue in academia, you can revert to a specialty training programme, as long as you are meeting the required competences of the clinical programme.

Recruitment to these programmes

ACFs are typically advertised during the autumn. It is worth remembering that ACFs and CLs are not aligned to specialty recruitment timetables and that posts offered within each region of England vary from year to year. Keep an eye on job adverts and deanery websites for most up-to-date information on how and when to apply for these programmes.

Clinical academic training structure in England



Northern Ireland

Clinical academic training in Northern Ireland is co-ordinated by the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency and Queens University, Belfast.

Academic Clinical Fellowships

Duration: Two years

Point of entry: ST3 or above

These posts are two years in length and aim to develop doctors' clinical and academic skills. 25% of the doctor's time will be spent carrying out research. ACFs will be then be well placed to make a successful application for a PhD/MD.

Academic Clinical Lectureships

Duration: Two years

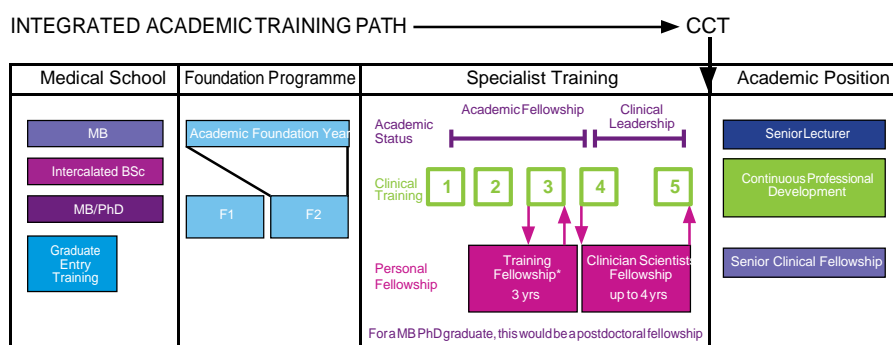
Point of entry: ST3 or above

Doctors will normally have completed a PhD/MD prior to applying for an ACL. Doctors complete their clinical training (50%) whilst carrying out postdoctoral research (50%).

Recruitment to these programmes

Trainees already appointed at ST3 or above (ST2 for GP) are eligible to apply. ACFs are typically advertised during late spring/early summer, usually around May.

Clinical academic training structure in Northern Ireland



Scotland

Post-AFP academic training opportunities in Scotland are badged under the umbrella of the Scottish Clinical Research Excellence Development Scheme (SCREDS)

SCREDS provide outlets for doctors and dentists wishing to pursue a career as a clinical academic or in medical education.

Clinical academic training in Scotland

Duration: Up to entire duration of specialty training

Point of entry: From ST1/CT1

There are no ACF or equivalent posts in Scotland, but a series of SCREDS opportunities to develop academic skills through all aspects of medical training post-foundation.

These Scottish posts provide integrated clinical academic training and are funded by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and Scottish universities. They typically average 80% clinical time and 20% academic time, with flexibility according to career stage reached.

Generally, year one would prepare a lecturer to go out of programme in year two, returning post-PhD into a guaranteed clinical lectureship position. NES Clinical Lectureships are organised regionally, with very close liaison between deaneries and universities, and vary slightly depending on the university with which they are affiliated.

The following website provides an overview of clinical academic opportunities within Scotland:
[http://www.scotmt.scot.nhs.uk/specialty/scottish-academic-training-\(screds\).aspx](http://www.scotmt.scot.nhs.uk/specialty/scottish-academic-training-(screds).aspx)

Recruitment to these programmes

Academic trainees are appointed after going through the national recruitment process, leading to the award of a National Training Number (NTN).

Everyone applies for NTN in open NHS competition. Once you hold a NTN, no matter what specialty you are in you can apply to join a pre-doctoral academic scheme such as the ECAT Lectureship scheme, STMTI scheme, MRCCP3 scheme or you can apply for PhD funding from the Wellcome Trust, MRC and other charitable foundations.

The posts are very flexible and can be obtained at any point between finishing foundation and CCT. Posts are advertised on individual university websites, medical journals and on the NES website.

Other useful links to the Scottish University academic schemes include:

abdn.ac.uk/acat - University of Aberdeen

dundee.ac.uk/dcat - University of Dundee

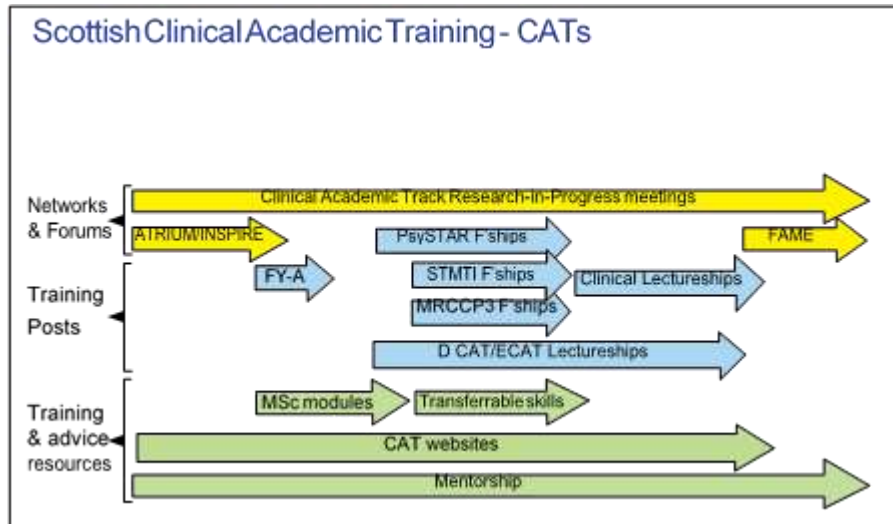
ecat.ed.ac.uk - University of Edinburgh

gla.ac.uk/colleges/mvls/graduateschool/academicandclinicaltraining - University of Glasgow

st-andrews.ac.uk - University of St Andrews

clinicalacademicjobs.org/medical - MSC site on which many posts are advertised.

Clinical academic training structure in Scotland



Wales

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) The Wales Deanery, in association with the major Welsh Universities and the Welsh Government coordinate the Welsh Clinical Academic Training Fellowship (WCAT) programme for medical and dental trainees. WCAT posts are run-through clinical fellowship training positions in academic medicine.

Duration: Entry through to CCT

Point of entry: F2/ST1+

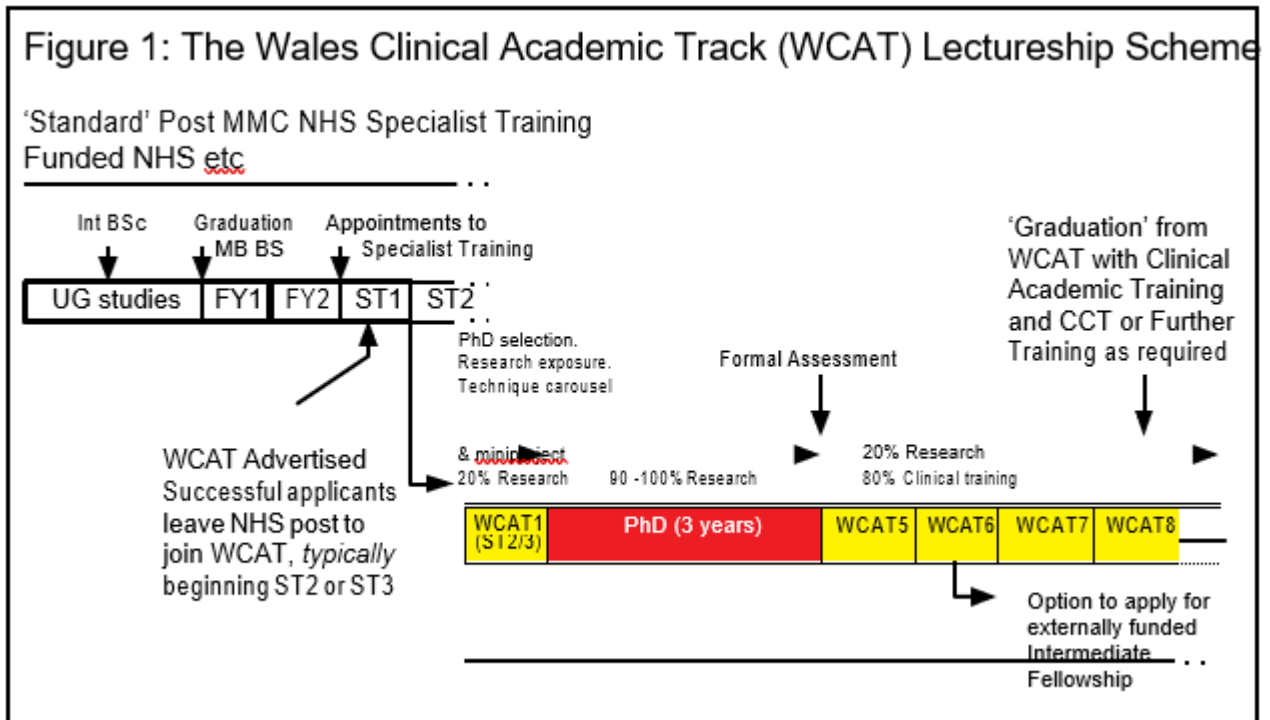
Each WCAT includes an out of programme, salary funded PhD training fellowship lasting 3 years. The clinical training years have 0.2 WTE protected time for academia.

Recruitment to these programmes

Applications are welcome from clinical academics in all specialties, including dentistry and medical education. Applications are invited for clinicians at CT/ST1 level or above (F2s are invited to apply for their CT/ST1 year). Interested applicants are advised to contact supervisors in the relevant specialty to discuss potential research projects prior to making an application.

Posts are typically advertised in November with up to five posts available per year. For further details, please visit the WCAT website: walesdeanery.org/specialty-training/academic-medicine/wcat

Clinical academic training structure in Wales



Other opportunities after the Academic Foundation Programme

If you choose not to apply, or are unsuccessful in obtaining an academic post directly after foundation, but are still interested in continuing in academia, do not despair!

Firstly, if possible, continue to maintain links with your academic team from your AFP. If, however, you are moving to a new hospital or region, get in touch with the local Research and Development office and find out what research is going on within the Trust/local education providers. You could also contact the local university and get involved with a project that matches your interest.

Many ACFs are available for entry at/from ST3 trainees so you have time to strengthen your portfolio and apply/try again. You could also organise your own research project whilst completing clinical training and perhaps even work towards completing a PhD at a time that suits your clinical development. While academic posts are great, they are not the only way to construct an academic career.

Continuing your interest in research

If you wish to continue in research, it is worth visiting local university websites as they often advertise funded research posts which may lead to higher degrees.

Major organisations such as the Wellcome Trust offer funding to support the brightest minds in biomedical research and medical humanities, with the aim of improving health. Please visit their website for details on the wide variety of funding schemes, Investigator Awards, fellowships and Strategic Awards.

Continuing your interest in medical education

Firstly, many deaneries offer ACFs and CLs or similar, specifically in medical education. Alongside these education/teaching clinical training posts, there are a number of distance learning programmes leading to certificates, diplomas and masters in medical education that may also be completed along the way.

In addition, many universities advertise teaching posts for post-foundation doctors.

Continuing your interest in medical leadership and management

The Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management (FMLM) offer Clinical Fellowships in a variety of settings in London and Manchester for those interested in management. This is an 'Out Of Programme' experience for post-foundation doctors and those in specialty training. This is a fabulous opportunity to work with senior healthcare leaders. For details, please see:

www.fmlm.ac.uk/cfs.

If the above 'Out Of Programme' experience does not work for you, there are a number of postgraduate certificates, diplomas and masters courses aimed at clinicians who want to move into health and social care management which can be undertaken as distance learning alongside your clinical work.

The Institute of Healthcare Management (www.ihm.org.uk) is another useful resource if you are considering this career path.

Continuing your career outside the public sector

There are many other opportunities available in the private sector from management consulting to working for pharmaceutical companies. There is no doubt that an academic foundation programme is good preparation for opportunities in these sectors too.

Ongoing academic support (mentoring)

Irrespective of your training grade and which path you choose to follow, it is important to have a good support network during your academic career. The Academy of Medical Sciences coordinates a highly regarded mentoring and outreach scheme for all academic trainees. Their website has a lot of useful information and specific details of the mentorship service can be found at: www.acmedsci.ac.uk.

Chapter 5

Hear from Academic Foundation Doctors!

Dr Sonika Sethi, Academic F1 Doctor

Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust

West Midlands North, England



My experience of the AFP so far

“AFPs in general is very self-initiative driven. The audits and research that I am currently undertaking were not from being an AFP doctor, but because I actively sought out for these opportunities.

Nonetheless, being an AFP doctor has been given me an opportunity to give back to those currently applying.

I co-founded and helped organise ‘Step2AFP’, a comprehensive interview preparation course in the West Midlands.

This course uniquely focused on small group interview workshops and tailoring an applicant’s mock interview to its Unit of Application and chosen thread (research, leadership or teaching).

93% of our interviewees received an AFP offer, with 86% receiving their first choice offer. This felt like a very rewarding outcome for us, considering 75% had attended no courses apart from Step2AFP. We hope to continue and expand this course on for future years.”

Advice about time management during the AFP

“In most deaneries, you do not get protected time to do research in your FY1 year. Therefore, this means balancing your time between clinical commitments and in reality, this ends up being in your evenings or weekends free.

In terms of making the most of your actual AFP block in FY2, it is key to meet with your supervisor early, such as in FY1. You can discuss what you would like to get out of it and what work may be involved prior to the start of the block. This allows you to plan ahead and use the AFP block in FY2 as efficiently as possible. Even after this block, expect write ups and submissions to be happening in the background of your clinical commitments.”

Tips for applying to the AFP

“Don't be afraid to seek help or advice from current AFP doctors! They'll be more than happy to help as they were in your shoes not too long ago!

- Collate all your potential points well before October deadline. Consider any publications (this includes letters), posters or any prizes that you've had throughout medical school.

- October is when you rank your choices of jobs. Consider more than just the AFP project of your choice. Think about the jobs you would like to have alongside this (which is essentially most of your 2 years), and what hospitals you may want this in too (e.g. location, DGH vs teaching).”

Dr Jie Lam, IMT1

University College Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

North Central and East London, England



Why I chose to apply for the AFP

“If you're reading this and are in two minds: just go for it. AFP is your chance to explore what being a doctor means to you beyond the wards - whether that's through the lab bench, the clinic or the classroom. You don't have to know it when you start out. I certainly didn't.

I felt drawn to Oncology by the compassion and sensitivity I observed in the care of cancer patients, but equally I felt intimidated by the weightiness of the research which many consider integral. Pipettes, centrifuges and mass spectrometers encompassed my understanding of "doing" science, and I was never especially enamoured by the idea of this myself.

When I embarked on my academic rotation, it really expanded my horizons. I had an opportunity to be involved in early-phase clinical trials - recruiting patients, following them up and evaluating their responses to cutting-edge technologies. Some of these technologies were conceptually mind-blowing, and it felt like a huge privilege to be able to work with these day after day, for the benefit of patients whose unique narratives were woven within the heart of my project. Seeing first-hand how new knowledge comes to life in the clinical setting, and experiencing the satisfaction of contributing in some small way to a challenging, complex and as-of-yet unmet clinical need, is something very special. Grasping this opportunity may be one of the most rewarding decisions you make in medical school.

My AFP proved to be the springboard for me to progress into Internal Medicine Training, as well as inspiring me to hope that one of my facets as a doctor can one day be that of a clinical trialist. I continue to be involved with my academic team - writing papers, presenting at conferences, and, importantly, enjoying their company outside of work - even to this day.”

*Dr Monica Lorraina Hytiris, Academic F2 Doctor
W24, Greater Glasgow and Clyde,
Scotland*



Tips for applying to the AFP

“First things first, decide which region you would like to apply to. You can apply to two different AFP programmes, and within these you can pick which region you would like. I picked Scotland and Northern Ireland. In the AFP selection you do not need to rank every job as you do for the foundation programme. You will only be considered for the jobs you apply for, but only get one offer within an application, so be selective. I, for example only ranked jobs in Glasgow, as this is where I wanted to move to.

Before applying for the AFP it is also a good idea have a look at the FY2 jobs. FY1 is the same everywhere with a mix of general medicine and general surgery, regardless of AFP or FP, so focus on whether there are FY2 specialties you would like in the academic rotation. Ultimately you want to enjoy your FY2 rotations, so pick a specialty you might want to gain some insight into for a future career path. In the W24 programme you reapply for FY2 jobs approximately halfway through FY1, this involves picking your top three rotations and writing a short paragraph about why you would want these rotations.

My top tip for the interview is to be prepared. Have all your certificates, publications, projects etc in a folder as you will be asked for evidence of these. Even if you have not completed a project it is worth mentioning it. And know your stuff inside out. The interview is nerve-wracking, but the panel are interested in seeing what projects you have done, and most importantly what you have learned from these. They will also ask some questions about what you have learned about the research process itself, and what your plans are for the future in terms of academia. My feelings about the interview were "the more they grilled you, the more they were testing you", because they felt you were a strong candidate, so do not feel apprehensive about the constant questions. I felt my interview went on for a very long time, but in reality it was only about 15-20 minutes long.

There is also a clinical scenario question to test your clinical judgement skills, because ultimately you are applying for a clinical post.

The process is daunting, but you have nothing to lose. You still apply for the regular foundation programme as well as the AFP, so you will still get a job. And remember, even if you do not get accepted there are lots of opportunities for teaching and research in medicine once you start, you just have to be proactive and look for them.”

*Dr David Johnston, CT2 Core Medical Trainee
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Northern Ireland*



“The Northern Ireland AFP involves a 4-month academic placement in the F2 year, which is protected academic time. Successful applicants can choose from various possible research areas, with each being supervised by a senior clinical academic.

I carried out my academic placement in Respiratory Medicine based at the Wellcome-Wolfson Institute For Experimental Medicine, Queen’s University Belfast. Under the guidance of my supervisor, Prof Cecilia O’Kane, I carried out my own laboratory-based project focused on non-tuberculous mycobacteria. This helped me develop useful skills for academic medicine, such as reviewing relevant literature, planning experiments, learning laboratory techniques, and analysing data. This 4-month protected block of time was useful as it provided a focused period to concentrate on the research. During my academic placement, I also took the opportunity to attend a weekly respiratory clinic, which helped me maintain and develop my clinical skills.

Additionally, the AFP doctors in Northern Ireland can take advantage of many teaching opportunities during the academic placement. For example, I carried out several clinical skills teaching sessions for second-year medical students, and was also able to participate in a standard-setting meeting for one of the medical school multiple choice examinations.

I also completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Medicine through Queen’s University Belfast, which is an excellent opportunity to gain a postgraduate qualification offered to all AFP doctors in Northern Ireland. This involved giving presentations based on my research plans and results, and the submission of a 1000 word “Extended Abstract”. This helped develop my skills at delivering oral presentations and academic writing.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the Northern Ireland AFP, and would highly recommend it for trainees who are interested in clinical academic medicine.”

*Dr Michael Zervos, Academic F2 Doctor
Torbay and South Devon,
Peninsula, England*



Why I chose to apply for the AFP

“I have always really enjoyed teaching, and did a lot of it at medical school. I didn't know if I would make a good candidate for the AFP as I wasn't in the top deciles at medical school. While I didn't have publications or posters or prizes, I did have a lot of educational experience in a range of fields, and had worked hard on that throughout medical school.

I gave the application a go, and am really glad I did. The AFP has been amazing professionally and personally, and I have grown a lot as an educator and doctor as a result.”

Advice about time management during the AFP

“Most AFPs have the academic time in F2, but to make the most of this time, it's best if you can get projects started during F1.

There is a lot of self directed learning and work, and you need to be disciplined with yourself so you don't end up wasting the days.

The academic time can be really flexible, and is great to expand your horizons in terms of projects, conferences, publications, taster weeks, courses and anything else you can think of! Be creative with your time, and make the most of the opportunities.”

Tips for applying to the AFP

“The white space answers are crucial to getting the interview. Think about what your unique selling points are, and why YOU specifically would make a great Academic AND Doctor in that trust. Make sure you spell out your achievements succinctly, and relate them back to why you deserve one of the posts.

At interview, you'll be selling yourself and your knowledge so make sure you prepare. The interviewers will want to help you shine, so spell out your thinking in the clinical scenario, prioritise patient safety, and remember to escalate when appropriate.”

*Dr Amarit Gill, Academic F2 Doctor
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board,
Wales*



My experience of the AFP

“If you’re reading this, you’re probably considering an AFP post. My advice is – go for it!

I took a punt and haven’t looked back. My AFP consisted of a 4-month block of academic time as the third rotation in F1. As part of this, I happily accepted the opportunity to study for a fully funded, part-time research Masters delivered through a collaboration between our local university and the North Wales Clinical Research Centre. Currently, I am in the final stages of writing my dissertation, and whilst it is tough going alongside clinical commitments, with a good time management it has definitely been doable! My project focuses on physiological changes following TURBT for bladder cancer, particularly focusing on predicting complications through blood markers.

The AFP has opened my eyes to what a career in academia involves. I’ve had experience of writing and submitting ethical approval applications, designing research methodology, collecting clinical data, developing laboratory skills and writing papers for publication. Additionally, I used the time to get involved in medical education. I delivered teaching presentations to students and designed a new induction programme for incoming F1s. The skills I have learnt are transferable to future academic projects as I look forward to starting speciality training.

Furthermore, this post supported my application to become a UKFPO Leadership Fellow – which has been a truly amazing opportunity to develop my own leadership skills as a foundation representative, gain insight into decision making processes nationally, and promote learning in leadership to others. It is because of this post that I am an editor for this publication – the same publication I read before applying to the AFP!

I’ve had a brilliant two years and wouldn’t hesitate to recommend the AFP to others. Overall, I feel I have become a better researcher, educator and leader, but above all else, a better doctor.”

