



HARP Clinical Research Fellowship Application Guidance (PhD)



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Introduction

Health Advances for Underrepresented Populations (HARP) is a clinical PhD Programme dedicated to redressing health inequality through representative research in an inclusive environment. The programme is located at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) and at City St George's, University of London (City St George's). We welcome applications from any health professional, regardless of their background, who have the scientific rigour, drive and ambition to carry out world-class research in underrepresented populations and diseases.

Underrepresented populations are underserved by healthcare and underrepresented in research due to:

- social inequalities (examples - demographic and [protected characteristics](#))
- marginalisation (examples - socioeconomics, education, lifestyle choices, legal and housing status)
- health status (examples - mental health or rare diseases)

This Doctoral Training Programme for health professionals, supported by the Wellcome Trust, Barts Charity, QMUL, City St George's and the Trustees of the Medical College of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, will provide a 3-year full-time clinical research PhD training fellowship.

The HARP programme also offers an optional 1-year full-time pre-doctoral training phase for those who have not previously had the opportunity to gain exposure to research but would like to gain that experience and enhance their competitiveness for a PhD position. It also allows, optionally, to do an MSc during this year. Application for the 1-year pre-doctoral phase involves a separate application form, please contact the HARP Manager for details.

Following completion of the PhD, those who are employed by one of the supporting organisations¹ will be eligible for up to 20% full-time equivalent funding for 2 years to support post-doctoral research-related enrichment activities.

¹ This is currently agreed for Barts Health and ELFT employees

General information

- Healthcare professionals that are eligible to apply include:

art therapists	occupational therapists
chiropractists/podiatrists	operating department practitioners
chiropractors	optometrists
clinical psychologists	dispensing opticians
dental hygienists	orthoptists
dental nurses	osteopaths
dental therapists	paramedics
dentists	pharmacists
dieticians	pharmacy technicians
drama therapists	physician assistants
health visitors	physiotherapists
healthcare	practitioner psychologists
physiological sciences	prosthetists and orthotists
physical sciences and biomechanical	radiographers
engineering and bioinformatics	social workers
medical graduates	speech and language therapists
midwives	vets
music therapists	
non-medical public health specialists	
nurses	

- Applicants should be practicing and be registered in the UK or the Republic of Ireland on the day of the application deadline (such as the General Medical Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council, General Optical Council, General Pharmaceutical Council, General Dental Council and others). Medical graduates must be registered on a UK/Republic of Ireland specialist training programme or must be a registered GP. At the time of taking up the fellowship, medical graduates must have completed foundation training. All fellows must have completed their undergraduate degree and be registered with the relevant professional body. Healthcare professionals other than medical graduates need to have at least 1-year full-time equivalent (FTE) of clinical practice.
- Projects must demonstrate a clear relevance to the main aim (research projects on underrepresented patient groups or diseases) of the HARP PhD Programme.
- Applications should be made jointly by the candidate with their supervisors, outlining the proposed programme of research and the nature of the training to be provided.
- Salaries should be requested according to experience on the appropriate clinical salary scale, including London weighting if relevant.
- Routine clinical work (that is not related to research) should be limited to no more than 8 hours a week (2 clinical sessions) FTE (16 hours for craft specialities FTE, 4 clinical sessions) during the fellowship and the host institution must provide a signed statement agreeing to this restriction.
- One candidate can only apply with one project, and one project can only be submitted by one candidate. A candidate can reapply once; however, should seek feedback from the HARP Programme Directors before the second submission.
- HARP does not allow concurrent study or transferring fellowships, therefore you are not eligible to apply if you are in receipt of a current fellowship, i.e. an existing PhD fellow.

How to apply

Applications must be received by email (info@harpphd.org) by 16:00 on the **12th January 2026**. Applications received after the deadline will **not** be accepted.

The application needs to contain the following elements:

1. Application form (please note this includes 2 forms, the application form and the equality monitoring form)
2. Case for support document as single document (3 sections)
3. Collaborator supporting letters (if any)
4. Supporting letter from Head of Department
5. Supporting letter from Supervisor
6. Ethical approval (if any and available at the time of submission)

You must submit the above as one document

The fellowship application is a one-stage process; however, all applicants are **strongly** encouraged to discuss their project and any re-application with a HARP director prior to submission. Fellowships are awarded by panels consisting of members of the Faculty, Advisory Board, appropriate experts and members of the public who will be co-opted as necessary.

There are four elements to the assessment process:

1. **Eligibility:** at this initial stage the scientific summaries of each application are assessed by the fellowship funding panel. Applicants will be informed at an early stage if their proposal is rejected because it is not within the remit of HARP or is incomplete. All suitable applications will undergo external peer review.
2. **Peer review:** the full applications of those successful at the suitability stage will be sent for external scientific peer review by experts of international standing in the field of the proposal.
3. **Shortlisting:** the full applications and peer reviews are assessed by the fellowship funding panel members. Shortlisted applicants are invited to attend interview.
4. **Interview:** the fellowship awarding panels interview the shortlisted applicants and funding decisions are based on the outcomes of these interviews. The Faculty and Advisory Board members and co-opted other experts as well as lay members of the public will form three small panels for the interviews.

Shortlisting is expected to be early March followed by interviews by end of March. Fellowship start dates will be from September onwards.

Further information and FAQs about applying for fellowships are available [here](#).

Guidance for completion of the application form

The word numbers suggested in certain sections are the maximum allowed, but often significantly less words can provide suitable information.

Application form- Part 1

Section 1

CV- please complete all Applicant details

Research outputs:

Please enter a complete list of the fellowship applicant's research publications and other outputs to-date (full citations including title and all authors). These should be separated into

- Original peer reviewed papers
- Reviews
- Books or book chapters
- Editorials, letters or case reports
- Conference presentations
 - Oral
 - Poster
- Other research outputs, such as
 - Development and sharing of new datasets, software, research reagents, tools, methods, products or patents.
 - Contributions to collaborations/consortia/team science
 - Participation in Patient and Public involvement and engagement activities (PPI)
 - Influences on policy, practice, education or training
 - Development of new preventative, diagnostic, treatment or management approaches and interventions
 - Improvements to health or quality of life of patients and the public

Applicant's statement

Please use this section to state your reasons for applying for this PhD Programme. Outline the skills, knowledge and experience you have gained from your previous experiences (consider studies, work, community and personal activities) that are relevant to this project. Consider experiences that demonstrate your potential as well as what you have achieved. Please give us any information that contextualises your achievements to date. Describe how the Fellowship will further your research and career aspiration.

Part-time working

We are supportive of fellows undertaking their Fellowships part-time as part of their usual working pattern and with the support of the host organisation. Part-time working is not permitted for the purposes of continuing clinical training or to maintain another salaried position. Fellows have the opportunity to work part-time either from the outset of their PhD fellowship or as a result of a change to their working pattern during their PhD. Questions related to part-time work can be discussed with the Programme Directors.

Supporting letters

1. A supporting letter from the prospective primary supervisor showing their support of the applicant and the project. This letter can provide details of the research environment the fellow will work in. The supervisors need to state their agreement to seek recognition with the [UK Council of Graduate Education Research Supervision Recognition Programme](#) within the first 12 months of the Fellowship. There is a fee which will **not** be covered by the HARP programme.
2. A letter from the Head of Department where the research will be conducted including a statement that appropriate space and support is in place to host the PhD fellow within the department. The Head of Department needs to guarantee facilities and resources for the tenure of an award and where applicable, also guarantee that the award holder will be granted status and prerogatives of other academic staff of similar seniority.

Section 2

Scientific title

This should be descriptive

Scientific abstract of research including key goals

This should include the purpose, study design, the specific area of research interest for which this application is entered, and the potential application of results.

Explain why this project is suitable for the HARP PhD Programme

Based on the overall aim of the HARP PhD Programme, describe how your research will fit into our remit. The NIHR INCLUDE [webpage](#) could help guide consideration of what constitutes underrepresented and help applicants consider which factors their proposal aligns with.

Case for support

This document (margin 2cm, Arial 11) should be submitted as an attachment, consisting of 3 parts:

1. **Four-page project description including figures**

Please include the following sections within the project description case for support:

Background & Importance:

Briefly and clearly explain the context of your research, the particular area(s) that your proposal seeks to address and the need for further understanding or treatment options with regards to the research gaps in this field. Why is this study necessary to inform a gap in knowledge that will be useful for subsequent translational research?

Preliminary Data (optional)

Hypothesis / Research questions and aims:

What is your hypothesis or research questions and what steps will the project take to support (or oppose) the hypothesis or answer the research questions?

Experimental Design/Methods

Development opportunities:

What are the potential next steps that would be required to get your research findings to a further phase of research, for example a clinical intervention or the next research question to be asked? Please outline any relevant intellectual property issues. When might the benefit be achieved, with realistic justification of these timelines?

2. **References:**

All authors should be listed (for large author numbers papers, just mark relevant position of applicant/supervisors). Please highlight all publications by you, your supervisors' group or current collaborators in bold.

3. Please include a **Gantt chart** of your project

Impact

Describe the expected impact of your project over the next 3-5 years, including the significance and sustainability. This could include environmental impact - both physical and cultural, impact on researchers, patients, the public, science in general and society.

Lay summary

Please outline the background to the problem, the aims and purposes of your proposal and why they are important, a brief plan of the research project and the relevance to main aim of the Programme and potential patient benefit.

Note on the language: The lay case for support should be written in appropriate non-technical language. For more information on how to write a clear and informative lay summary please use the following resources: [INVOLVE plain English summaries](#); [The Plain English Campaign](#)

Resubmission

One re-application per candidate is permitted

Section 3

This section should be filled in by the supervisors

Supervisors

Please add details for primary and secondary supervisors. A third supervisor can be added with similar details as second supervisor, this supervisor can be from other institutions, including overseas.

- List previous and current PhD / MD / Doctorate fellows of supervisor over last 5 years
- Confirm date of last supervisor training date for first and second supervisor
- Confirm that supervisors are willing to seek recognition with the [UK Council of Graduate Education Research Supervision Recognition Programme](#).
- Please outline supervision plans managing and monitoring student progression and the supervisor suitability for the supervision for this project (200 words)
- For the 2nd (optional 3rd) supervisors state how this supervisor will contribute to the project and supervision (200 words)
- 3rd supervisor can be from a different Institution including overseas

Section 4

Collaborators

Add details for up to 4 collaborators that will be essential to the success of your doctoral studies. Collaborators are individuals who are not involved in the day-to-day execution of the research but may supply research materials, specific expertise or access to patients. All collaborators associated with the application will be required to provide a letter of support. These should be attached to the application.

Section 5

Human and animal involvement

Please only complete this section if applicable to your application.

Include details of Ethics Committee permissions relevant for human research that will be required, or have already been obtained.

Animal involvement in study

Please only complete this section if applicable to your application.

We are committed to the principles of reduction, refinement and replacement in animal studies. The projects must comply with Wellcome's policy on animal usage in research: <https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/guidance/use-animals-research-policy>.

Provide details of Home Office project and personal licences (number holder name and date of expiry) and details of procedures of moderate severity and above. Detail the maximum severity of the procedures involved.

Please justify the use of animals, the species and techniques proposed and the number of animals to be used per experiment. Please include details of sample size calculations

and statistical advice sought for the number of animals required to reach statistical significance.

Please follow the PREPARE guidelines (Planning Research and Experimental Procedures on Animals: Recommendations for Excellence) and the CAMARADES/NC3Rs systematic review facility recommendations for the design and analysis of your experiments. For power calculations, please follow the ARRIVE guidelines (2020, 2nd edition), and other developments and advances in the [3Rs](#), including the [Norecopa](#) platform

Section 6

Patient and Public Involvement

Indicate how you are involving the public, including patients and patient groups, actively in any of the stages of your research e.g. in developing the research proposal and/or taking account of likely public reaction to your research. Add justification for costs if any.

Section 7

Communications Plan

State what plans you have for disseminating results of your work to the professional community as well as patients and the lay public. Explain how these plans will be supported by the host Research Organisation's own policies and facilities communication and education of the public.

Section 8

Finance and costs

The finances requested for the grant should be entered in this section. The finances will be reviewed and adjusted individually, if necessary, for each successful application. At QMUL the costings are not required to go on Worktribe. At City St George's Clerkenwell campus the costs are required to go on Worktribe, at the Tooting campus costs will be prepared manually.

Fellow salary

The only salary included should be that of the fellow. No other salaries will be accepted in this section. The PCQ form is embedded into the application, please send this form to info@harp.phd.org for salary costings.

Expenses/Consumables

Reasonable research expenses directly related to your proposal can be applied for. Items and their cost should be listed. Access fees for specialised equipment could be listed here. The programme may need to adjust the expenses.

Apparatus/Equipment

Only small items permitted (pipettes, small centrifuge etc. costing less than £5,000). Please add these items under consumables.

Travel costs

Travel for conferences - Do not include in the expenses list, we plan to support at least one national and one international meeting visit per fellow, if the fellow is presenting at a meeting.

PhD tuition fee costs

This is provided as a block funding for UK-based students (Irish, residents of Channel Islands and EU citizens resident in the UK).

Eligible costs:

- Any additional salaries/staff time (e.g. statistician/data manager/trial manager) should be costed as a consultancy under expenses and not as a salary. These costs will be considered by the panel

- Access charges for use of specialist equipment
- Costs to cover travel and accommodation (if required) to a collaborating institution can be requested
- Training courses for the professional development of the fellow can be applied for. These should be relevant to the aims of the fellowship and justified within the application
- Cost for overseas research – please discuss with HARP Manager
- Costs associated with patient and public involvement/engagement can be applied for, and candidates are advised to use the INVOLVE guidance [here](#). Please contact the HARP Manager for further information

Ineligible costs within a clinical research fellowship application:

- Computers are expected to be supplied by the host institution
- Relocation costs
- Home office license fees (personal and project)
- Funding to provide maintenance of equipment
- Office stationery costs unless required for the project and justified accordingly
- Publication costs for open access to be claimed from the library (for QMUL-based fellows) or can be directly applied for from Wellcome (for City-based fellows). Advice on support for open access can be asked from the HARP Manager
- Travel cost for conferences (see above)

Animals

We require the costs associated with animal use to be separated by species and strain.

Specific instructions for finance

Supervisor should submit the 'PCQ form' (form is attached to application form) to info@harpphd.org, allow ten working days before deadline. For further details and for questions contact the HARP team.

Justification for consumable support requested

Provide detailed justification for the consumables (300 words)

Justification for animal research support requested

Including animal species, the number of animals per species to be used, and why each species is the most appropriate for this project (300 words). Please include

- Animal species
- Animal strain
- Whether they are genetically modified
- Source of supply
- Number of animals to be purchased for each year of the fellowship
- Purchase price per animal
- Number of animals to be maintained for each year of the fellowship
- Number of weeks maintenance required for each year of the fellowship
- Weekly maintenance cost

Section 9

Reviewers

Please suggest at least SIX reviewers with relevant scientific knowledge with whom you or your supervisors have **not** published or collaborated with over the last 5 years. List, if any, potential reviewers you do not wish to be approached. All reviewers will be checked by HARP directors for suitability.

Section 10

Equality monitoring

This section is for equality monitoring purposes and the information you provide will be anonymised and will not be available to recruiting supervisory teams. QMUL and City aims to promote an organisational culture that is respectful and inclusive irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, ethnicity, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex and religion or belief. Moreover, it seeks to ensure that intersectionality is recognised, with explicit acknowledgement of the interconnected nature of social identities including race, class and sex, where these facets can create overlapping levels of discrimination or disadvantage.

Contact

For further enquiries on any aspect of your application, or any issues relating to the submission of your application, please email info@harpd.org.