HARP Barts Pre-Doctoral Fellowship Application Guidance

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Introduction

Health **A**dvances for Under**r**epresented **P**opulations (HARP) is a clinical PhD and Pre Doctoral 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 (CSGUL). We welcome applications from any health professional, regardless of their background, who have the 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, migration, legal and housing status)
- health status (examples - mental health or rare diseases)

The research should focus on a population, subgroup, phenotype or disease that is underrepresented in research *and* have a credible path to tackling or improving a consequence of this underrepresentation. This one-year (full-time equivalent) Pre Doctoral fellowship is open to all health professionals registered in the UK or Ireland and we are committed to broadening the backgrounds of our fellows through open and inclusive recruitment.

The Pre-Doctoral fellowship is for people who are committed and show signs of high potential to succeed in research but have had little research exposure. This could be a healthcare professional with knowledge, experience and passion for their clinical area who wants to develop a career in research but is not yet ready to submit a competitive doctoral application. The scheme offers one year to gain experience in research and work with supervisors to develop a competitive PhD proposal. Successful candidates will have the option to complete a full MSc, or relevant modules, at QMUL or CSGUL and will automatically be shortlisted for interview should they choose to apply to the HARP PhD scheme.

General information

- Healthcare professionals that are eligible to apply include:

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

- Applicants should be practicing and be registered in the UK or the Republic of Ireland with the relevant professional body 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). Health professionals need to have completed at least 1-year full-time equivalent (FTE) of clinical practice, and medical graduates must have completed foundation training. Projects must demonstrate a clear relevance to the main aim of the HARP PhD and Pre Doctoral Programme: research on underrepresented patient groups or diseases.
- Applications should be made jointly by the candidate with their supervisor, outlining the proposed programme of research and the nature of the training to be provided.
- Salary costings should be calculated fully by the relevant research office at either QMUL or CSGUL. Supervisors are expected to review these and the Head of Department letter of support should include a statement acknowledging that the costings are correct. In line with the Follett principles, salaries should be calculated by the research office according to experience on the appropriate clinical salary scale, including London weighting if relevant. Applicants need to provide research offices detailed information on their salaries backed up with their latest payslips. They also must inform the costings team if they intend to change jobs between application deadline and start of HARP fellowship or if they expect to be promoted during this time.
- No further funds can be requested after the award letter is accepted.

- Regular clinical work 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. Note this time is included in the full-time salary provided by HARP.
- 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

Other options to consider

The HARP programme consists of a series of opportunities designed to help interested health professionals train in research. Before you start, consider discussing with the HARP team which is the right opportunity for your stage.

Internship

This is for people who have an interest in but have not had the opportunity to experience or engage with research. You will spend one protected day per week for 6 months embedded with a research team or collaborator from within the HARP community. During this time you will keep your clinical employment but will receive a QMUL or CSGUL honorary contract to enable you to engage in research. You will be able to use this time to improve your understanding of the research process and see what clinical academia could offer you. This period may help you understand an area that could interest you and build relationships, building towards an application to the pre-doctoral or doctoral training phase.

Clinical PhD Fellowship

This is a three-year full-time clinical fellowship open to all health professionals registered in the UK or Ireland who have existing research experience they want to build on. We are committed to broadening the backgrounds of our fellows through open and inclusive recruitment.

How to apply to the Pre Doctoral training scheme

Applications must be received by email (info@harpphd.org) by 16:00 on the **1st February 2027**. Applications received after the deadline will **not** be accepted.

The application needs to contain the following elements:

1. Application form
2. Supporting letter from future supervisor for this application
3. Supporting letter from previous clinical supervisor/teacher
4. Supporting letter from Head of Department confirming salary costings are correct
5. Supporting letter from Head of Clinical Department, if fellow intends to retain employment in the NHS
6. Equality monitoring form (you will receive a link you will need to complete)

You must submit elements 1-5 of the above as one PDF document

The fellowship application is a one-stage process; however, all applicants are **strongly** encouraged to discuss their project with their supervisor 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 project 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. **To be within remit a proposal must address a population, subgroup, phenotype or disease that is underrepresented in research. They must *also* show that this underrepresentation has a consequence that the research will tackle.**
2. **Peer review:** the full applications of all those successful at the suitability stage will be sent for peer review.
3. **Shortlisting:** the full applications and peer reviews are assessed by the fellowship fundingpanel 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 two small panels for the interviews.

Shortlisting is expected to be early March followed by interviews in person on 19th March 2027. Fellowship start dates will be from October 2027 onwards.
Further information and FAQs about applying for fellowships are available here.

A suggested timeline for application

Preparing a successful Pre-Doctoral application takes time and involves far more than writing the proposal itself. Below is a suggested timeline to help you prepare a successful application.

Time to application	Action
3-4 months before	**Reach out** to potential supervisors and discuss a project. Supervisors must be an employee of QMUL or CSGUL The current approved supervisor list can be accessed at www.harpphd.org/our community/
3 months before	**Design** your project and draft your application working closely with your supervisor. Read past fellows' projects for a sense of scope and style. Consider contacting current fellows.
3 months before	**Reach out** to a HARP Director to discuss your project idea (if necessary) and resubmission (if relevant), to help ensure you are eligible and for support with the process.
3 months before	**Discuss** with your clinical team or Training Programme Director so they can support and plan for your time away.
2-3 months before	**Confirm** your proposed primary supervisor.
2 months before	Consider **ethics or animal licences**. If your project needs approval, consider starting the process now. It does not need to be completed before submission but you need realistic plans and timelines in your application.
1-2 months before	**Present** your plans at research group, whiteboard or clinical departmental meetings as appropriate to gather opinions and suggestions. **Circulate** your project plan to your supervisor well before the deadline for feedback and improvement. **Liaise** with Research Offices at QMUL or CSGUL to complete your salary costing.
>2 weeks before	**Ensure your salary costing is complete.** Please send your pre-costing questionnaire by mid-January at the latest to the research office. The final Worktribe costing from the research office (salary only) will need to be added to the application.
Submission	Apply by email to info@harpphd.org by **deadline on Monday, 1st February, 16:00.**
0-10 weeks after	After receipt, your application will be screened for eligibility and then sent for review. Assuming you are eligible you will not hear anything until shortlisting is completed. If you are successful, you will receive an invitation for interview. If you are unsuccessful, you will receive notification as well as feedback.
10-12 weeks after	**Reach out** to your supervisor to support you with mock interviews. Candidates who prepare often perform better at the interview.
Interview	Around **6 weeks** post application.
Outcome	Around **8 weeks** post application.

~8 months after	**Fellowships start**

Guidance for completion of the application form

The Applicant is the prospective pre-doctoral fellow. Please adhere to the word count limits where stated as going over risks rejection of the application. You will not be penalised for writing less if you have provided the necessary information.

Structured Curriculum Vitae - please complete Applicant details, Qualifications, Employment History, Career Breaks, Prizes, and Awards, Experience of Teaching, Further experience, Additional information, Publications

Research outputs:
Please enter a complete list of the 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)
    - Influence 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
- Relevant other similar outputs such as audits and QI projects you have led.

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 pre doctoral fellowship or as a result of a change to their working pattern during their pre doc. Questions related to part-time work can be discussed with the Programme Manager and Directors.

Reasons for applying

Please state your reasons for applying to this programme. Outline the experience you have gained during your studies, work, community, & personal activities that drive you to explore academic possibilities. Consider experiences that demonstrate your potential as well as what you have achieved. Describe how this pre-doctoral experience will further your career aspirations.

Project Plan

Outline your research topic and how you developed your project plans. At the pre-doctoral fellowship level, we are not expecting a fully developed proposal, however you are required to identify a research area and the methodologies this research may involve. The research area should align with your professional practice. If the professional practice does not align with your area of research interest, you will need to clearly demonstrate how you will work towards such alignment to support a competitive doctoral fellowship application.

Explain why this project falls within the remit of the HARP ethos

Based on the overall aims of HARP, describe how your research will fit into our remit. The NIHR webpage could help guide consideration of what constitutes underrepresented and help applicants consider which factors their proposal aligns with. This is where you should make a clear case for your specific research project (not just the population or characteristics of your participants) and how it will address an area of underrepresentation. It is not enough to simply say that a disease has not been studied in a group of people without explaining the consequence of this and how this project addresses that disparity.

Proposed supervisor details

Please add details for the primary supervisor; they may want to complete this section themselves. The primary supervisor should meet the supervision requirements for their institution to be the primary (e.g. they must be CAT A supervisors at CSGUL); please discuss this with your primary supervisor to ensure this is the case.

- List previous and current PhD / MD(Res) / other doctorate fellows of supervisor over last 10 years
- Confirm date of last supervisor training date
- Please outline evidence of the supervisor's commitment to career development and creating a positive research culture (300 words)
- Please add up to three career vignettes each for each of the supervisors' previous researchers they have supervised, mentored or managed. If possible, these should demonstrate a good fit with the HARP DTP aims (maximum 100 words per vignette).
- Please outline the primary supervisor's scientific suitability for the supervision of this project (200 words).

Development and training

Building on your project plan, outline how you will use your pre-doctoral time to develop your knowledge and skills needed for future doctoral research by outlining how you intend to use your pre-doctoral time e.g. building research networks, research experience including undertaking preliminary work, developing a proposal with supervisors, studying modules and/or short courses in specialist skills and methodologies, placements with research groups or centres, leadership training, public involvement training, dissemination of preliminary work and development of related skills. If you intend to enrol for an MSc or equivalent programme at QMUL or City, please provide justification for the course chosen, and outline how this sits within the context of your wider development plan (max. 500 words).

- Queen Mary, University of London MSc courses can be found here.
- City St George's, University of London MSc courses can be found here.

Supporting letters

1. A supporting letter from a previous clinical supervisor/teacher, outlining the applicant's suitability for this pre-doctoral programme.
2. A supporting letter from the prospective primary supervisor showing their support of the applicant and the project. As a minimum, this letter should:
    - provide details of the research environment that the fellow will work in
    - plans for supervision and supporting progress
    - outline the role of other supervisors if appropriate
    - confirm that salary costing is accurate
    - demonstrate active sponsorship of the fellow through the application process
    - express commitment to contribute to HARP training and recruitment
3. A letter from the Head of Department confirming the salary costing is correct.
4. If the fellow intends to retain employment in the NHS, a supporting letter from the Head of Clinical Department confirming that the fellow and line manager have reviewed and agreed appropriate clinical and non-clinical activities and responsibilities that maintain and develop their professional competence; and that these are agreed in advance with the fellow and their academic supervisor and flexible to the fellow's research demands.

Salary costs

The salary requested for the grant should be entered in this section; no further full costing is required as part of the application. **Ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of costings rests with the applicant, their supervisor and institute.** At QMUL and City St George's Clerkenwell and Tooting campuses, the costings are required to go onto local Worktribe systems.

Fellow salary

The only salary included should be that of the fellow. This **must** be calculated by the relevant research office and should include full costs (salary, pension, national insurance, London weighting etc). Please ensure you give the research offices all relevant information about your current salary, date of progression and any intention to change job or grade during the time of the pre-doc.

Ineligible costs

While further costing does not need to be included on your application, please be aware that there are several costs not covered by the fellowship:

- Computers are expected to be supplied by the host institution. Specialist equipment that falls outside this should be justified.
- Relocation costs
- Home office license fees (personal and project)
- Visa application costs and international student fees

Specific instructions for finance

Please liaise with your relevant QMUL or CSGUL research finance office to complete your salary costing (supervisor to advice).

QMUL applicants please ensure your salary costing is submitted within Worktribe by mid-January 2027 to ensure they can be reviewed and approved in time. Please add the completed research office-derived salary costing to your application.

CSGUL applicants must engage with the CSGUL research finance team and have the salary costing submitted by mid-January 2027. Contact the Research Support Services Manager, Peter Aggar: peter.aggar.1@citystgeorges.ac.uk

Animal research

If you intend to work with animal tissues, then please discuss this with your supervisor in the first instance.

Equality monitoring

This MS Form 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.

Please remember to contact info@harpphd.org to request a link to this form, as it is a requirement for the application.

The Interview

On the day you will be interviewed by two panels. The first panel will focus on you and your potential as a clinical academic, focusing on your experience to date and what makes you the right person for a HARP pre-doc. The second panel will focus on your project proposal and its potential to address a problem within the HARP remit.

Tips for a successful application

The HARP team are looking for someone who has the *potential* to develop into a future academic leader. You do not necessarily have to have a lot of experience in research but need to show in your application a clear interest, commitment and drive to improve human health. We are looking for people who are passionate about their chosen area of study (whatever it may be). We are interested in projects that have a clear potential to explore and address a problem that is underrepresented in current research (the HARP remit). It is important to show this in your application and at interview. Start your preparation early, seek support and practice for interview to give yourself the best opportunity to show us why you and your project are right for the HARP program.

Note to supervisors – we expect our supervisors to take an active sponsoring role in helping fellows prepare their applications and in preparing for interview.

Contact

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