

NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Pre-Doctoral Fellowship

Guidance for Applicants 2023

The NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Greater Manchester

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Greater Manchester (ARC-GM) supports applied health and care research that responds to, and meets the needs of local populations and local health and care systems. Our overarching goal is to improve the health of the Greater Manchester population and the quality and sustainability of the health and social care they receive. We will achieve this by co-producing excellent research in areas prioritised by the system and by enhancing its impact through supported implementation into policy and practice.

Overview

The ARC-GM Pre-doctoral Fellowship Programme provides research training awards for health and care professionals working in Greater Manchester (**excluding** medicine and dentistry but **including** those from allied health professions, pharmacy, social work and social care, public health, commissioning and policy makers) who wish to develop their career by combining health and social care practice and development with applied research and research leadership.

The programme is aimed specifically at health and care professionals who aspire to undertake PhD level study in the future. The Pre-doctoral Fellowships are designed to provide the time and support to develop a PhD proposal and funding application. Pre-doctoral Fellowships will start in September 2023.

We are keen to tailor this programme as much as possible to suit individual commitments and timescales. The award holders have the opportunity to undertake formal teaching with appropriate academic supervision. Fellows will prepare an application for submission for an NIHR or similar doctoral fellowship opportunity, which includes a research proposal and suitable training and development plan.

At the end of the scheme it is expected that each award holder will have:

- developed a robust research proposal which is a suitable vehicle for a Doctoral Fellowship application, building on existing research skills and experience and fits with the Doctoral Fellowship funder's remit;
- identified an appropriate training and development programme to support the development of research skills;
- developed a clear understanding of their career trajectory;
- developed a publication plan;
- developed their research skills.

Key Dates

Applications open	Week beginning 20th March 2023
Deadline for submission of application	18th May 2023, 5pm
Shortlisting panel decisions	Week beginning 19th June 2023
Interviews	29th June 2023
Interview outcome	No later than 5th July 2023
Pre-doctoral Fellowship start date	1st September 2023

Application Process

All applications must be submitted using an online form, which will be made available on the ARC-GM website on Monday 20th March 2023 (see <https://arc-gm.nihr.ac.uk/pre-doctoral-fellowship> for more information). Applications should be submitted by 5pm on 18th May 2023; applications made after this time will not be considered. Please contact ross.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk if you have problems accessing the online application form.

Letters of support from the applicant's line manager and service/department manager must be submitted by the same deadline to arc-gm@nihr.ac.uk.

All applications will be assessed for initial eligibility (see Eligibility section). Those eligible will be shortlisted according to the criteria described in this guidance (see Assessment Criteria). Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview which will take place on 29th June 2023. We will notify candidates of the outcome of interviews no later than Wednesday 5th July 2023.

Contact Information

For any further questions please contact:

Dr Ross Atkinson

Programme Manager

ross.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk.

Eligibility

The Pre-doctoral Fellowship is open to applicants fulfilling the following criteria:

- Health or care professional (excluding medicine and dentistry). In addition to nursing, midwifery, social work, social care and allied health professionals, those from public health, commissioning and health policy maker backgrounds are also eligible;
- Employed within a health or care organisation in Greater Manchester (including our partner NHS Trusts, a Local Authority or voluntary sector organisation in Greater Manchester, but excluding private health or care organisations);
- Graduate with a first degree;
- Has academic supervisors in place, one of which is from the ARC-GM (see Supervision section).

Please contact ross.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk for any queries about eligibility.

We welcome applicants from all sections of the community regardless of age, sex, gender, gender expression, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and transgender status. All appointments are made on merit.

Funding for backfill

Applicants may choose to undertake their Fellowship over one year (at 50% Full Time Equivalent) or two years (at 25% Full Time Equivalent). ARC-GM is able to contribute up to a maximum of £20,000 per Fellowship towards the award holder's salary costs, by way of payment to their employing organisation.

Approval is required from the award holder's immediate line manager and the manager of their service or department. This is required as evidence of the employer's commitment to facilitate release from duties for the duration of the award. This should be a separate letter/email of support to arc-gm@nihr.ac.uk. The letter(s) of support must be submitted by the application closing date.

The paid backfill time can be taken flexibly, and applicants should discuss how this will work with their line manager and Trust Research Manager at the earliest opportunity. Time will be used to attend workshops and training, develop the applicant's PhD application and their research profile for example, by conducting pilot work, patient community involvement and engagement work and working on publications.

Costings

Full costings (including on-costs) for your post must be submitted in your application; you must indicate your preferred option on the application form (i.e. 50% over one year or 25% over two years). Please contact the relevant person in your organisation's finance department to provide you with the relevant backfill costs (including on-costs) for your time from 1st September 2023 to either August 2024 or August 2025. Please ask your finance contact to confirm these costings by email to arc-gm@nhr.ac.uk. Salary costings should include any increment you are due within the Pre-doctoral Fellowship period.

Additional funding over and above the maximum of £20,000, (including on costs) cannot be provided by the Fellowship*. Please discuss your options with your current line manager and/or service/department manager if backfill of your salary will be in excess of £20,000. Options could include:

- Your manager is still willing to release you for the required time despite the funding shortfall;
- You/your manager are able to identify alternative funding to cover the shortfall.

Please refer to the Training and Support section above regarding training and development costs.

*We acknowledge that £20,000 may not be sufficient to cover the full 50% of an applicant's salary. The panel will consider a proposal of less than 50% backfill for those in this situation; however, assurance would need to be given that the ambitions in the Fellowship were feasible in the allocated time frame, noting that the Fellowship can be carried out over one or two years .

Research Topic and Outline

Your application should outline your proposed research for the duration of the Fellowship that you intend to develop into a PhD application. Your academic supervisors can support you with developing this section (see Supervision section below).

Research questions that have arisen from your 'day-to-day work' within your organisation and align with patient, service and organisational strategic priorities are particularly welcomed. Please link in with your organisation's research department or research champions for support with this.

ARC-GM has seven broad research themes. All ARC-GM supervisors work within at least one of these themes. More information about each of the ARC-GM themes is available on the ARC-GM website:

- [Digital Health](#)
- [Mental Health](#)
- [Healthy Ageing](#)
- [Evaluation](#)
- [Organising Care](#)
- [Economic Sustainability](#)
- [Implementation Science](#)

There are two supporting Themes, with which the proposals of applicants may align:

- [Capacity Building \(Training and Development\)](#)
- [Public and Community Involvement and Engagement \(PCIE\)](#)

Where possible, please describe in your application how your proposed research may link to the ARC-GM research themes. Please liaise with your ARC-GM supervisor for support with this.

The assessment of the proposed research will be based on:

- Justification
- Aims, objectives, research questions
- The likelihood of the proposal answering the research question(s)
- Methods
- Outcomes (i.e. path to impact – how does your work have the potential to deliver improved outcomes for health and care services, improvement to health or an improved patient or service user experience?)

Please see the Assessment Criteria section for further information about how applications will be assessed (in addition to the proposed research).

Training and Support

Pre-doctoral Fellowship award holders are classed as an 'NIHR Academy Members' as the funding for their award is received through the NIHR Infrastructure of ARC- GM or a partner organisation. As such we will share with you any relevant training and development opportunities from the NIHR Academy and report back to the NIHR on your development with us.

You and your supervisor(s) should discuss the training or development that is needed throughout your Fellowship. Examples of training and support activities that you may be able to access funds for could include: support with formal research training courses, such as a Masters module in research; training in specialist skills and research methodologies; placements with other research groups or centres; leadership training; conference attendance; public and community involvement and engagement; dissemination of relevant research; professional development relating to research.

Supervision sessions, meetings, workshops and teaching may need to be provided both online and in-person, with a degree of flexibility.

Supervision

Academic supervisors have a vital role in supporting applicants throughout the duration of their Fellowship to work on the development of a specific doctoral Fellowship application and to undertake the training proposed in their application.

When applying for this Pre-doctoral Fellowship, it is expected that applicants will have the help and support from at least one academic supervisor when putting together the application.

Applicants to the Pre-doctoral Fellowship programme must identify their primary academic supervisor who should be eligible to be the primary doctoral academic supervisor within the Higher Education Institution of choice for the follow on PhD. Academic supervisors will have a substantive contract with a Higher Education Institution, but they may also have a dual clinical role (i.e. clinical academics). Applicants are encouraged to approach their potential supervisors as soon as possible to discuss their intention to apply for the Fellowship and develop their application. Applicants can have up to three pre-doctoral supervisors but one of these must be from ARC-GM; this person could be the primary or co-supervisor.

Careful consideration should be given to the choice of primary academic supervisor in terms of:

- record of conversion of Masters to PhD students;
- experience as a PhD supervisor;
- experience in your research area of interest/relevant methodologies;
- ease of maintaining contact with your supervisor/availability of the supervisor;
- suitability for continuation as the PhD supervisor (if the award is successful) or ability of the supervisor to help find the best PhD supervision.

Please contact Dr Ross Atkinson (ross.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk, Programme Manager) if you require support in identifying a suitable supervisor from ARC-GM. Please contact the relevant post-graduate tutor in a Higher Education Institution if you need support in identifying additional suitable supervisors.

Assessment Criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed by a shortlisting panel which will include at least three people with a range of backgrounds in applied research. The following criteria will be used to assess suitability of candidates based on their application form and performance at interview for those who are shortlisted:

- The candidate's research experience;
- The research proposal (see Research Topic and Outline section above);
- Timelines and milestones;
- Relevance and potential benefit to the applicant's area of practice;
- The suitability and commitment of the applicant to pursuing further research;
- The quality and appropriateness of the proposed academic training and development (including Doctoral Fellowship application development);
- The appropriateness of the proposed academic supervision;
- The clarity of the application, including presentation style and writing skills.

Applications will be graded according to one of the categories below after initial review and discussion of the shortlisting panel. Constructive feedback will be provided to candidates on their applications.

'All criteria met'

Good evidence of research knowledge and experience as well as a good understanding of development needs. Clear research question and good study design and implementation details provided. Study clearly appropriate and feasible with realistic budget established. Training plan and doctoral fellowship development plan feasible and relevant with timeline provided. Subject area in line with an ARC-GM research theme with strong and appropriate academic team identified. Excellent scope

for the described project to provide benefit to patients. Very professionally organised and presented. Very high standard. No amendments or clarification required.

‘All criteria met, minor/fixable weaknesses’

Clear evidence of research knowledge and experience with indication of development needs. Essential design and implementation details provided. Clear research question or aim guides the design. Study adequately described and reasonable project management and budget details provided. Training plan and doctoral fellowship development plan feasible with suitable timeline. Subject area in line with an ARC-GM research theme and academically aligned. Good scope for the described project to provide benefit to patients. Professionally presented. Minor amendments and/or clarification needed but suitable for funding.

‘Majority criteria met, minor/fixable weaknesses’

Evidence of research knowledge but some essential design and implementation information missing. Clear research question or aim, professionally presented and writing style clear. Relevance and value of study well described. Some project management and budget details provided. Training plan and/or doctoral fellowship development timeline missing or inadequate. Study has potential but needs consultation and revision in most areas. Subject area in line with ARC-GM research theme but not academically aligned. Scope for the described project to provide benefit to patients.

‘Some criteria met, major/fundamental weaknesses’

Evidence of some research knowledge but lacks experience or understanding of development needs. Lacks essential design and implementation information. Research question or aim unclear or inconsistently stated. Application generally clearly presented or written but lacks significant detail and with little effort made to describe relevance or value of study. Project supervision details missing or inadequate. Training plan and timeline missing or inadequate. Some potential but would need major redesign and informed consultation. Subject area not in line with ARC-GM research theme and/or academically aligned or poor scope for patient benefit.

‘Criteria not met’

No evidence of research knowledge or understanding, multiple design flaws, relevance of ARC-GM not addressed, poor scope for the described project to provide benefit to patients, writing style unclear, multiple typographical errors.