

Academic process for writing a Doctoral fellowship

Department of Primary Health Care Sciences

This page provides **step-by-step guidance** for applying for a fellowship or grant, including timings, support, and departmental requirements.

Step 1: Prepare your idea (9-12 months before deadline)

- Begin developing your **research idea** and **training plan**
- Align your plans with your **career goals** and the **funder's priorities**
- **Complete fellowship expression of interest form** – this also ensures that a meeting is booked with the fellowship advisor
- Seek early advice from:
 - Supervisor or line manager
 - Senior colleagues and mentors
 - Patient and public contributors (where relevant)

Strong applications take time. Allow **at least 6 months**, ideally **9–12 months**, to prepare.

Step 2: Understand the potential funders and build your support team

- Read the **funder guidance carefully**
 - Check eligibility, required sections, and assessment criteria
 - Consider:
 - The funder's strategic aims
 - The likely expertise of the assessment panel
 - Choose supervisors, collaborators and mentors who **complement your expertise**
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Step 3: Writing, training, and peer support

4-6 months before deadline you are encouraged to:

- Seek advice from senior colleagues and methods groups
- Get training on [completing a narrative CV](#)
- Attend departmental training such as:
 - Research proposal workshops
 - Grant writing sessions

- Writing days

Opportunities are advertised via the weekly newsletter.

Step 4: Seek external feedback

- Contact [Research Support Services \(RSS\)](#) early if applying for an NIHR fellowship.

RSS can help with:

- Study design and methods
- Patient and public involvement
- Research inclusion
- Panel-style feedback from non-specialists

This feedback often highlights where proposals need greater clarity.

- Contact Career service for both NIHR and other fellowships
 - If you are in a fixed-term contract from Grade 6-8 you can apply for Careers Service support by filling the form [here](#). Your application will be evaluated by the advisers that handle research staff. Should your account be approved, you will be able to access CareerConnect to book appointments, attend events and view opportunity listings. You will be able to access support from our advisers. including mock interviews, application assistance and more.
 - If, for some reason, you are ineligible for a CareerConnect account, The Careers Service recommend [Home | People and Organisational Development](#), as they have some courses you may find helpful.

Step 5: Submit scientific abstract for departmental review

- Complete [online form](#) no later than 8 weeks before the deadline with:
 - A **2-page scientific abstract**
 - A **training and development plan**

Step 6: Costing prompt to be completed

- Aim to finalise 3-4 weeks before deadline
- Start developing [costing prompt form](#), and share with grants pre-award team to determine estimated budget. Allow plenty of time for this.
- If a SoECAT is required ensure you complete the online form or contact the CRN Study Support Service team for support
- Partners or collaborators may also need to provide costings

Step 7: Departmental review and decision

- The doctoral fellowship panel will review your proposal, meeting approximately 6 weeks before the deadline
- A decision will be made to:
 - Approve submission
 - Recommend amendments which can be achieved in the timeframe
 - Suggest deferral of submission

Step 8: Request letter support (at least 2 weeks)

At least 2 weeks before the deadline, once departmental approval is confirmed, send to **Claire Meadows** (cc supervisor/mentor):

- Draft full application
- Draft **Letter of Support**, covering:
 1. Why the funder should invest in you
 2. Why the department is the right environment
 3. The department's track record
- Confirmation from the grants team that costings and checks are complete

Step 9: Final approval and submission

At least 5 days before funder deadline

- Approval from the Department and University research services
- Final authorisation is completed by the Deputy Head of Department for Research which is currently Chris Butler.