

Academic Clinical Fellows as GP Trainees – a GP Trainers' guide

1. What is an ACF?

Academic Clinical Fellows are trainees doing joint academic/clinical training, usually awarded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR). ACF posts exist in most specialities. They are a 25/75 split of academic/clinical training over the duration of the award. Locally awarded ACFs may start in ST3, when there will be a 50:50 academic/clinical split over 2 years.

2. How does ACF recruitment work?

Recruitment to ST1 posts: Applications for GP ACFs are handled by the National Recruitment Office for GP Training. Candidates applying for these posts complete both the standard GP training application and the additional academic training form. Applicants must demonstrate suitability for a clinical GP training programme via the usual assessment methods (computer based test and Selection Centre) in order to be considered for an academic programme. In Oxford, the Department of Primary Care shortlists and interviews candidates (usually in January each year). Clinicians and senior members of the clinical faculty (e.g. the GP Dean) are often on the selection panel. Successful applicants will be allocated to a post on the Oxford VTS rotation. They then pick VTS rotations in the same way as any GP trainee.

Recruitment to ST3 posts: In addition to the nationally recruited GP ACFs a smaller number of GP ACFs are funded by the NIHR School for Primary Care Research (SPCR) and recruited within the Deanery. These posts are advertised to the ST2s already training within the Deanery, and selection is based upon an application and interview within the department. The posts run from ST3 to ST4, with the usual split of clinical and academic training time. These trainees may be offered clinical placements which are not based at practices in Oxford.

3. What does Academic Training look like for a GP trainee?

ST1/2 – Whilst GP trainees complete their 'hospital' rotations they have no dedicated academic time. In their 6 month GP post in ST1/2 the trainee gets 3 sessions per fortnight of academic time. These are usually taken on a Tuesday as the remaining 1 session is the trainees fortnightly learning set.

ST3/4 – In ST3 the trainee will do 2 days in practice, 2 days academic and 1 day learning set.

In ST4 the trainee does 2 days in practice and 3 academic.

4. What about the e-portfolio?

Academic trainees have the same e-portfolio as all other trainees. In ST1/2 they complete the same number of WPBAs as everyone else. In ST3/4 they complete half the number per 6 month period (i.e the full number over the 2 year period). They have 6 monthly educational supervisor meetings as 'usual'.

ACFs are encouraged to update the e-portfolio with details of their academic activity. They will usually log this as an Academic Activity (under the log entry type) and then assign curriculum section 2:04 – 'Enhancing Professional Knowledge'.

It is important also to have Personal Development Plan entries related to the academic component.

5. Am I responsible for academic supervision?

No. ACFs will all have an academic supervisor, based at the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences. The academic supervisor has oversight of their academic development, and will complete an academic ARCP – uploaded by the trainee on to their e-portfolio every year.

If you have any concerns about the trainee, contacting their academic supervisor might be a good idea. Their details will be on the e-portfolio, but the trainee will know who they are and be able to link you up.

6. Postgraduate Diploma of Health Research

ACFs have the postgraduate diploma of health research (University of Oxford) funded alongside their fellowship. This is an opportunity for formal academic training/qualification, and most will want to do it. Completion of the diploma involves taking 6, week-long classroom based modules. After each module there are weekly tasks culminating in the submission of a 4000 word long assignment. This diploma takes a significant amount of time and it is important to be aware that at times your trainee may be completing an assignment along with managing all the other training requirements. Your trainee may request study leave to facilitate the completion of the module.

7. What about AKT/CSA/OOH?

ACFs have to complete requirements for these within the 4 year training period. Some ACFs prefer to get the CSA out of the way in ST3, whilst others wait until ST4. This is very much a discussion between you as their educational supervisor and the trainee.

8. What is my trainee doing on 'academic days'?

ACFs are based in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences in Jericho. Early in their fellowship they will work with the academic team to identify a team and projects to work with and on. These will vary according to their personal area of interest. Over the duration of the ACF trainees are expected to become increasingly independent in their research and to take on responsibility accordingly. Some ACFs will get grants in their own name, others will consistently work within one research group. Although publication is not mandatory for ARCP, it is a metric of academic output, as are conference presentations etc.

9. What might an academic trainee add to a practice?

ACFs will be interested and excited by research and teaching. There may be additional things that they can contribute to the practice, such as organising a journal club, presenting their own research findings and suggesting ideas for educational meetings. If you are a practice signed up to recruit for research projects, they may be interested in seeing how recruitment for these studies work on a practice level.

10. How is less than full time training organised for academic GP trainees?

Please see the document 'Less than full time academic GP training – a few considerations' for further details about this.