# Guidance for managers and registered professionals supporting applications to join the Clinical Research Practitioner accredited register

## Introduction

The Clinical Research Practitioner (CRP) accredited register was approved by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) in April 2020. PSA accredited registers set standards for practitioners working in unregulated health and care occupations. The NIHR has worked with the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) to establish the CRP register in response to the growing diversity of the clinical research delivery workforce and increasing numbers of skilled practitioners who are not part of a statutory register.

A successful application to an accredited register demonstrates that practitioners meet a defined set of standards and work within an agreed scope of practice. By joining the register CRPs can demonstrate to patients, colleagues and employers that they are competent, trustworthy and committed to achieving high standards of personal behaviour and technical competence. Being part of an accredited register also provides the means to take action should there be concerns about a registrant’s fitness to practice. The accredited registers programme is supported by NHS Employers. <https://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/retain-and-improve/standards-and-assurance/professional-regulation/voluntary-registers>

A working group, including lead nurses, workforce leads and CRPs, shaped the content of the Standards of Proficiency, Scope of Practice and the supporting evidence required for application to the register. The application process is designed to enable a more standardised and consistent approach to supporting CRPs and their continuing professional development across all settings. A proportionate approach based on risk assessment and the principles or ‘right-touch’ regulation informed the iterative development of the register. A commitment to patient safety and the promotion of public confidence and understanding of the CRP role will continue to inform the approach and evaluation of the register.

The AHCS also holds a Directory for CRPs. The CRP Directory acts as a formal community conduit, supporting the development of the professional identity of CRPs and enabling communication and sharing of information. CRPs are encouraged to join the Directory to learn about the development of the register. <https://nihr.ahcs.ac.uk/background/>

The register will open for general applications early in 2021 following a piloting phase. The register will first open to CRPs who are degree graduates. An equivalence process that will support entry for experienced CRPs who do not have a degree is in development.

## The role of managers and statutory registered professionals

The support and commitment of line managers and colleagues is essential for all CRPs intending to apply to the register. The register is for experienced CRPs who have significant experience and are working at Practitioner level as defined in the Skills for Health Career Framework. A portfolio of evidence for submission will include:

* A personal critical narrative based on completion of reflection templates.
* Involvement of a statutory registered healthcare professional in a review of practice
* Documented assurance of competence and appropriate practice
* Confirmation by a line manager or appropriate statutory registered healthcare professional of the validity of the portfolio of evidence

The expectation is that line managers will be involved and supportive of applications. It is a local decision with respect to who is involved in the assurance and confirmation. When line managers are part of a statutory register, it may be appropriate for them to complete all the required input. In other cases, where the line manager is not part of a statutory register, the involvement of a statutory registered professional who works with the CRP will also be required. The process is designed to be developmental. Colleagues supporting the CRP in their application, need to be familiar with their work and be supportive and informed about the principles and value of accredited registration in the NHS workforce.

## Practice development; statutory registered professional involvement and confirmation

Applicants are required to have a development conversation that includes a review of their current practice in relation to the Standards of Proficiency. This conversation is designed to provide opportunities to focus on the clinical context of the applicant’s research experience and practice over the last 12 months and preceding years where this is relevant. This focus on clinical context and experience is designed to address any risks arising from a lack of experience of working with patients in clinical or other settings.

Practice development conversations need to cover practice hours and assurance that the applicant has the clinical skills, research knowledge and leadership skills required to support research delivery and ensure patient safety within their individual scope of practice. Applicants will also have to supply documented assurance around their communication competency and this should be included in practice development discussions and confirmed by the inclusion of name and registration number/PIN on the application template.

## Confirmation of Applicant’s Portfolio by line manager/ statutory registered healthcare professional signature

Confirmation that the portfolio of evidence submitted is complete, authentic and accurate is required before submission. Confirmation includes:

* Confirmation that the CRP is working to a named competency framework aligned with the NIHR Integrated Workforce Framework
* Confirmation of practice development conversation and communication style
* Confirmation of the completion of the required certified training and education
* Confirmation that the applicant has a current DBS Certificate

Templates can be found here: <https://nihr.ahcs.ac.uk/crp-register-pilot/>

## Continuing development

The involvement of managers and clinical colleagues in the iterative development of the register will enable improvement and ensure that the process for registration is configured optimally for all those involved. There will be opportunities to provide honest feedback about the process as the register becomes established. There will also be opportunities to join the cohort of verifiers who will be involved in the oversight, quality assurance and leadership of this initiative.

## Entering the register; AHCS-NIHR Verifiers

On receipt of an application, the AHCS will first perform administrative checks and process the registration fee (£30 per applicant). For the pilot and for a defined period when the register first opens, all applications will be verified by someone from the AHCS-NIHR cohort of verifiers. This will ensure that the evidence submitted by individual applicants falls within an acceptable range of variance to maintain quality standards that are consistent and fair.

Verifiers will have access to peer support and learning and together form an important leadership community. CRPs will be able to become verifiers once admitted to the register. A small group of moderators will have a role in resolving any instances where a decision can’t be reached. Applicants will receive the outcome of their application from the AHCS. This could include a request to submit additional information within a defined timescale.

## Governance and oversight

The CRP register Quality and Assessment group will bring verifiers together with AHCS and NIHR leads to oversee the development of the application process in line with the QA framework for the register. In addition, the CRP Register Registration Council, will report to the AHCS Regulation Board in line with the established governance framework for the AHCS Register. The register development is a joint initiative between the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN). An oversight group within the NIHR CRN will provide strategic oversight and connection with workforce development initiatives across the NIHR.

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Please contact CRPadmin@ahcs.ac.uk if you have any questions, including how to join the team of verifiers, or if you would like to talk with a member of the team.