

Accredited Registration for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs)

Guidance for applicants

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Introduction

This guidance is for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs) who are eligible to join the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) Accredited Register. It will support you in making your application and should be read alongside the Scope of Practice for CRPs, the Standards of Proficiency for CRPs on the AHCS Accredited Register and additional supporting documents available on the CRP website . (<https://nihr.ahcs.ac.uk/>).

Who is eligible to join the CRP register?

CRPs are members of the research delivery workforce, working in clinical environments and other health and social care settings. CRP registration is for those working at practitioner level, as described in level 5 of the Skills for Health Career Framework.

The Register is therefore intended for experienced CRPs who have developed their skills and knowledge over time. By joining the voluntary register CRPs are making an active choice to take part in the developing CRP professional community.

There are overlapping identities in clinical research delivery and Clinical Research Nurses and Allied Health Professionals working in research delivery may also define themselves as Clinical Research Practitioners. Registration as a CRP is not a productive use of time for professionals who are already registered on a statutory register and therefore have access to the benefits and public assurance that registration provides.

What is the purpose of AHCS accredited registration for CRPs?

Assured voluntary registration plays an important role in supporting high standards of practice amongst occupational groups who are not part of a profession regulated by law. The Professional Standards Authority (PSA) has recognised CRPs as a professional group and agreed that they are to join the AHCS accredited register. ([PSA decision April 2020](#))

The Scope of Practice and Standards of Proficiency for CRPs have been developed collaboratively with the AHCS and jointly by the NIHR and the NHS research community. Together the documents serve to enable demonstration of the skills of CRPs and bring forward their professional potential to meet the high expectations of patients, the public and the research ecosystem.

Accredited registers are an established part of the UK regulatory landscape. The CRP Register will help to protect patients and individuals participating in clinical research by contributing to maintenance of high standards. If registrants fail to uphold the required standards, or show they are not fit to practise, their circumstances will be reviewed and they may have their registration status removed.

Additional benefits of CRP registration are to:

- demonstrate your personal commitment to high standards and continuing professional development;
- encourage you to take an active role in supporting the evolving professional community of CRPs;
- contribute to a more consistent and informed understanding of the role and contribution of CRPs as this continues to develop;
- provide structured opportunities for reflection, learning and improvement, and;
- raise awareness of the CRP Scope of Practice, Standards of Proficiency and evidenced based tools that support continuous professional development for CRPs.

The AHSC accredited registers programme

The CRP Register is part of the Academy's accredited registers programme and sits within an established governance framework. The Professional Standards Authority (PSA) is the accrediting body for the AHSC Register. The Academy is required to evidence that they meet all the required standards and governance arrangements for PSA Accredited Registers on an annual basis. All information submitted is processed in accordance with Data Protection requirements.

The Register development is a joint initiative between the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN). An oversight group within the NIHR Clinical Research Network provides strategic oversight and connection with workforce development initiatives across the NIHR.

Applying to the Register

CRPs are often graduates, but not always, and a significant number also hold post graduate qualifications. **The first phase of opening the register is restricted to applicants who hold a minimum educational requirement of a first degree or equivalent. You are required to evidence this by uploading educational certificates as part of your application.** An equivalence process for those experienced CRPs who do not hold a degree will be established in the later part of 2021.

All applicants will need to demonstrate they are part of the Academy's CRP Directory on application to the register. The CRP Directory serves as a pre-registration space and will provide access to information that is intended to help connect and serve the growing community of CRPs.

The CRP Directory is currently free to join. The fee to join the CRP Register is £30. AHCS fees, which will apply at joining the CRP register and annually thereafter, are to cover the administration costs of the AHCS, which is a not-for-profit organisation. These fees are non-refundable, including instances where an application does not meet the eligibility criteria or the required standards.

Assessing when to make an application will be a decision between individuals and their line managers, and should be seen as an integral part of your continuing professional development and

annual appraisal cycle in line with local arrangements. **The involvement of your line manager and colleagues in the application process is essential.**

Preparation of your application to register as a CRP brings an opportunity for discussion and sharing of your learning with your colleagues that will support a broader understanding of the CRP contribution to research delivery, both locally and nationally. As the CRP profession evolves, the register will contribute to the development of CRPs as a profession, enabling the infrastructure that is necessary for connecting your community of practice, sharing evidence based tools and responding to the changing demands emerging in the research delivery landscape in health and social care.

Requirements and Supporting Evidence

The online application process will guide you through your submission. There are four elements:

- Information about you and your role and setting;
- Confirmation by your line manager that you are meeting registration requirements;
- Structured reflections and supporting evidence that demonstrate how you are meeting the CRP Scope of Practice and Standards of Proficiency confirmed by a registered health professional, and;
- Completion of a set of declarations to support your application.

Education and Training Requirements

You will be asked to upload the following documents:

- Current GCP Certificate (Transcelerate-accredited), and;
- An undergraduate degree certificate or Level 6/7 apprenticeship from a higher education provider recognised by the appropriate regulatory body^[1].

^[1] In the UK, the Higher Education Institution must be on the Office for Students list of recognised providers. Where the degree has been awarded by an overseas provider a NARIC certificate indicating comparability is required. Evidence of master level education achieved within the UK could also be used.

You will be asked to provide evidence in relation to change of name if the name on your Certificate is different to the name you are registering under.

Your line manager will be asked to confirm that there is evidence held that you are meeting your local organisational requirements for Statutory and Mandatory Training

Applicants do not need to supply any additional evidence about this or other training and education and should avoid uploading any additional material into the online system as this will not be reviewed.

Confirmation of your application to register

Applicants need to involve their line managers in the confirmation of evidence submitted. You need to ensure that time has been set aside for discussion and the application process provides a very useful opportunity to make use of the tools that are available to support your development.

Confirmation by line manager signature includes the following:

- Confirmation that the applicant is working to a competency framework as part of an evidenced based approach to knowledge and skills development;
- Confirmation that the applicant has discussed and appraised their practice development with a statutory registered healthcare professional;
- Confirmation of the completion of the required statutory/mandatory training, and;
- Confirmation that the applicant has a current DBS Certificate and English Language proficiency.

The engagement of line managers is designed to promote and support an authentic and integrated approach. Applying to the register should be integrated with knowledge and skills development and support CRPs to recognise the scope of their role and work within the limits of their competence.

The use of Competency Frameworks and supporting tools, including the NIHR Integrated Workforce Framework, enables a structured and evidenced based approach to identifying areas for skills development and to take stock of achievements and progress. There are a number of Competency Frameworks that are available to support CRP development. The Integrated Workforce Framework (IWF) tool is also available to enable productive development discussions. These tools are available to download at <https://iwf.nihr.ac.uk/>

Confirmation by your line manager that a competency framework, or equivalent evidence based approach to competency development is in place, is an essential requirement for registration. Please review [details of the confirmation to be captured on this form](#).

Evidencing Your Practice | Meeting the Standards of Proficiency

The application process provides an opportunity for reflection and learning about the CRP Scope and Standards of Proficiency and how they support your practice development and contribute to safety and quality in clinical research delivery.

The 16 Standards are grouped in relation to:

- Professional Responsibility
- Behaviours, Knowledge and Skills relating to:
 - Clinical Research
 - Clinical Context
 - Leadership

The Standards of Proficiency set out the minimum standard that you must meet in order to register as a CRP. The evidence that you need to supply is focused on the following key areas:

Professional Responsibility

You are ultimately responsible for acting in accordance within the limits of your individual scope of practice and must be able to say no if necessary. This is particularly important considering the clinical context of your work. All applicants need to demonstrate that they are familiar with policies and guidelines that affect their work and how concerns and issues can be escalated to the right people so that they can be resolved in a satisfactory way.

The evidence required in this section is intended to enable self-reflection about your individual scope of practice at the time of your application. Discussing this and taking the time to reflect will provide the opportunity for authentic and productive conversations with colleagues. These discussions will promote a shared understanding of your individual scope of practice, including any limitations and plans for further development and learning. Knowledge, skills and experience will all determine your individual scope of practice and this is likely to change as you progress through your career as a CRP in accordance with the context of your work and the practice settings where you are working.

You are asked to provide evidence of your understanding of your professional accountability and limitations through 2 pieces of evidence:

- Reflective account of your professional accountability, and;
- Practice knowledge and context of practice experience discussed as part of a development conversation with a statutory registered healthcare professional.

Reflective account of your professional accountability

This is one of three reflective pieces you will need to complete as part of your application. The reflection should be focused on specific examples, such as an event or experience that can illustrate your own learning and understanding and how this has led to changes or improvements.

The Standards of Proficiency 1-6 outline the knowledge, skills and behaviours that you need to be achieving for registration as a CRP. Referring to these will help ensure that your reflection is focused and relevant. Some suggestions of themes you could choose for your reflection include:

- An example of a situation where you have responded proactively to a challenging situation such as being asked to do something that is outside your scope of practice (Standards 1 and 2);
- How you have contributed to finding a solution when there have been differences of opinion amongst team members (Standard 3);
- An example of how you have changed practices in order to better serve the diverse needs of study participants (Standard 4), or;
- An example that demonstrates how you work with clinicians so that everyone has a clear understanding of your role and individual scope of practice (Standard 6).

Your reflection should be concise and no longer than 2 sheets of A4 in total. You must not include any information in your reflection that could identify any personal data.

Within your portfolio of evidence, this reflective account, will sit alongside the 3 further pieces of evidence that you are required to evidence in relation to your professional responsibility:

- Practice development conversation with a statutory registered health professional;
- Evidence of 2 pieces of feedback, and;
- Communication skills observation.

Practice development conversation

This conversation will provide an opportunity for you to discuss the context of your experiences and understanding in relation to your individual scope of practice. The conversation should highlight areas of achievement, any concerns identified and areas to focus on for improvement.

The practice development conversation also provides an opportunity to involve colleagues in the registration process. Line managers who are also registered healthcare professionals may be the most appropriate person for this discussion. However, involving colleagues who do not have a line manager responsibility will widen the process as part of a culture that promotes and values the skills, expertise and responsibilities within all members of the research delivery team. This is particularly important considering that the development of CRP roles is still relatively new.

Applicants are required to confirm that they have discussed their practice knowledge and experience with a statutory registered healthcare professional as part of their development conversation. This conversation will usually be with a clinical research nurse who has a leadership role within your area of practice. The conversation should be informed by the CRP Standards of Proficiency and include:

- The clinical context (s) of your clinical research experience in the last 12 months and preceding years when this is relevant
- Your practice hours and clinical skills that are intrinsic to your clinical research activities
- Your workplace setting (s)
- Feedback that you have received (2 examples)

Feedback

Asking for and acting on feedback is an integral part of practice development for all health professionals. You are asked to provide 2 examples of feedback that demonstrate how you actively seek and use feedback to influence your practice. Feedback could be from colleagues, patients, your annual PDA or via compliments or complaints. You should record how that information was received e.g verbally, via letter, e-mail or report.

You do not need to upload any supporting evidence about your chosen feedback examples. You should choose examples that can highlight the connection between feedback and practice development. This could, for example, include suggestions for improvements received from patients and colleagues that have resulted in changes in practice. You do not need to upload any supporting evidence about your chosen feedback examples. You must not include any information in your reflection that could identify any personal data.

Communication

Communication skills are an essential part of your practice as a CRP. Research participants expect that information will be shared with them in ways that are accessible and take into account their freedom of choice and any preferences they may have about communication styles and format. Principles for the process of receiving informed consent is an integral part of Good Clinical Practice (GCP) and you need to be familiar with the policies that apply in your area of work.

You are asked to provide two examples, from the last 12 months, in which you have demonstrated an effective, inclusive and appropriate communication style. These examples should have been observed by a colleague who is in a supervisory role and who is part of a statutory register. If relevant to your role, you should include an example that relates your participation in the process for obtaining informed consent from a research study participant.

You must not include any information in your reflection that could identify any personal data.

Leadership: Advocacy for research and the CRP Profession

Your journey as a leader is an important aspect of your development as a CRP. The application process for registration is focused on two specific aspects of leadership;

- your leadership in terms of advocacy for research, and;
- your support for the CRP profession.

These two aspects of your practice as a leader have been identified as providing an indicator that you are an effective leader, willing to take an active role in promoting research and the contribution of CRPs. Your advocacy for research demonstrates your commitment to supporting research as an integral part of health and care services. Activities that contribute to the development of the CRP profession will demonstrate your active involvement in supporting and engaging colleagues to enable a culture that values all members' contribution to effective and safe research care delivery.

Your reflective account should briefly describe your leadership activity in relation to either your advocacy for research or in support of the CRP profession. The leadership responsibilities are outlined in Standard 16 and will help you to identify suitable examples that could include:

- Your contribution to promoting research across your area of practice, and/or;
- Examples of activities that promote understanding of the CRP profession.

Your reflection should be no more than two sides of A4 in total. You must not include any information in your reflection that could identify any personal data.

Working across boundaries

The theme of working across boundaries is selected for the third area of reflection highlighting the importance of these skills in delivering research care. You are asked to reflect on how you have

approached addressing permissions or gaining access to potential participants across a professional and or organisational boundary. This reflection could include, for example:

- Your experience engaging clinical teams in research;
- Your involvement in opening up new areas of research activity, and/or;
- Your learning from the introduction of new ways of working and how you engaged people.

Your reflection should be no more than two sides of A4 in total. You must not include any information in your reflection that could identify any personal data.

Your Declaration and continuing commitment to CPD

Your application to join the register can only be processed if you have completed the Declaration section. You should make sure that you fully understand the Declaration statement before completing and submitting your application.

All CRP registrants agree to maintain up to date records, together with supporting documents or other evidence of the Continuing Professional Development they undertake, to be provided to the Academy on request as part of a CPD audit of registrants. If selected you will be required to share this evidence with the Academy within 21 days.

Maintaining registration

Maintenance of your CRP registration is subject to the completion of a declaration that includes your continuing commitment to your own professional development and upholding the Scope and Standards in your practice. A portfolio of evidence will need to be submitted during the third year in order to maintain registration. There is an annual fee of £30 to maintain your registration.

What happens when you submit your application?

On receipt of an application, the AHCS will first perform administrative checks and process your registration fee. A percentage of applications will be verified by a member of the Academy's cohort of CRP register 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 apply to become verifiers once admitted to the register. A small group of moderators will have a role in resolving any instances where a decision cannot be reached.

Once your application has been reviewed you will receive notification of the outcome from the Academy. This could include a request to submit additional information within a defined timescale. When your application is successful you will be issued with a certificate and instructions on how you can use the PSA logo to confirm you are a member of an Accredited Register.

What you need to consider when putting together your application

Making sure that your evidence does not contain any personal information

You must make sure that you do not include any information that might identify an individual, whether that individual is alive or deceased. This means that you must record all information in a way that no patient, member of the public, colleague or any individual can be identified from the information. Your reflections and supporting evidence must not include:

- the department of place where a particular event took place;
- the name of any individual, or;
- description of the circumstance where an individual could be identified.

Checking the tone and style of your application

Applying to the register is a process to provide assurance that you have the support you need to practice to an expected standard, including access to training and development and continuing professional development at local level. By demonstrating that you are meeting the Standards of Proficiency and working within your individual Scope of Practice, you are demonstrating your commitment to high standards and the development of the CRP Profession. You do not need to sell yourself but rather focus on the strengths you routinely demonstrate as part of best practice. The best applications will be concise and focused on specific examples that demonstrate your learning and commitment. Please consider the following points when putting together your application:

- Do not go beyond the required length of your reflection;
- Be concise in your language;
- Make sure you include how you work with your team;
- Use reflection to illustrate learning and improvement, and;
- Avoid using examples that 'blame' others. The best reflections allow self-reflection, value colleagues and are solution focused

Referring to the application checklist for documents to upload

- GCP Certificate
- Degree Certificate (or equivalent)
- Change of name evidence (if required)
- [Confirmation](#) of application by line manager, referring to:
 - ◆ Competency framework and knowledge and skills development
 - ◆ Safeguarding and English Language
 - ◆ Practice-related feedback
 - ◆ Confirmation of practice development discussion
- [Documented Assurance of Practice Development](#)
- Structured Reflections, referring to:
 - ◆ [Professional accountability](#)
 - ◆ [Leadership](#)
 - ◆ [Working across boundaries](#)