

Thank you to everyone who submitted questions at our CRP event on the 14th March. It is really helpful to know the types of questions that are coming up regularly. The CRNCC NIHR and the AHCS have provided responses to your questions below. Please continue to contact us if you have any further questions about the CRP Directory or the CRP Accredited Register as we want to ensure that we support you in your applications.

We are holding a drop in session on *Monday 25th April between 14:00 - 15:00* to help with any queries in regard to your Clinical Research Practitioner register application. Please email: crpadmin@ahcs.ac.uk if you would like to come along to a drop in session.

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Who can apply to the Register?

The Accredited Register is for experienced CRPs who are working at Practitioner Level as outlined in the Skills for Health Career Framework. The Accredited Register is not suitable for people working in support roles, at the level often associated with 'assistant' in other NHS careers.

The diversity in job titles that characterise the CRP community means that many roles have the word Assistant or Support in the title even though the individual is working at **practitioner level**. Practitioners have a comprehensive, specialised, and factual knowledge and have knowledge, understanding and responsibility for working within their own defined Scope of Practice. Having Assistant in a job title is not a barrier to applying to the Register providing the applicant can demonstrate that they are working at the level of Practitioner.

The development of the Register is enabling conversations about job titles and standardisation and this is welcome. The subject of job titles and job description is a matter for local employers. We encourage the sharing of learning for the development of more consistent understanding of CRP roles and the development of a clearly defined career framework.

Currently CRPs also require a degree or equivalent to enter the Register. A pathway for experienced CRPs who do not have a degree will be available in the autumn of 2022 following a process of testing and collaboration.

Degree types and the accredited register including those awarded by non-UK institutions

Any degree subject at undergraduate level (level 6) or higher will be accepted as part of your application to the register. A foundation degree as a stand alone would not be sufficient to meet the requirements of the register. However this would count as prior learning and could perhaps shorten the study time for completing a full degree or degree apprenticeship programme. Again any subject would be acceptable. The foundation degree will also count towards the evidence required to enter through the experience route when this opens in autumn 2022.

If the degree qualification was awarded by a non-UK institution, then the CRP will have to upload a copy of 'UK ENIC' (Formerly known as NARIC) certification indicating comparability with UK standards

Exceptional access route - this is the route of entry to the register for those holding significant experience in delivery of clinical research but without an undergraduate degree or degree level educational qualifications

The majority of CRPs enter the workplace with a degree and often with higher level qualifications. There are also many CRPs who have progressed their careers through experience and training without degree level education. There is a commitment to provide a route to registration based on experience and this will be openly available in the autumn of 2022 following a testing period. There is an expectation that this gateway will be open for a limited time frame to encourage experienced CRPs to join the register at a time when the UK government is committed to supporting a high skills economy and degree level education.

CRPs who wish to access the register through this route will first need to provide evidence about their level of practice, and their experience. They will then be able to apply in the same way as their colleagues who have a degree and this will include the same approach to revalidation after three years of registration.

What are the minimum requirements to apply to the register in terms of experience? Does clinical experience count? Can you use experience obtained outside a research role for registration?

There is an expectation that making an application to the register is integrated into the annual appraisal process for CRPs. Before joining the register, you should have successfully completed your induction and reached a level of competency development that enables you to demonstrate that you are working comfortably at practitioner level; Level 5 of the Skills for Health Career Framework provides additional detail. This will not normally be within your first year of practice.

You can demonstrate relevant experience from previous roles e.g. research data administrator or clinical skills learned as a Healthcare Assistant. You are still required to work as a CRP for at least 1 year or until you reach a Practitioner level.

Will joining the Accredited Register support career progression?

Joining the Accredited Register demonstrates your own commitment to high standards and professional practice, integrated within your professional development plan and local appraisal process, which should be discussed with your line manager and colleagues, as supported by your employing organisation. The NIHR is committed to enabling growth and development of CRPs as part of a UK-wide programme, including support for local career progression initiatives. Registered CRPs are also eligible to apply to specific NIHR funding streams, alongside other identified registered health and care professionals.

How can you progress through the bands, what steps and what evidence do you need. How does CRP progression work if you don't have a professional qualification?

Role banding, opportunities for progression and joining the CRP Register all need to form part of your professional development plan and local appraisal process, supported by your employer. Being accepted onto the accredited register would not affect your current banding. Changes to banding and opportunities for progression is something that would need to be discussed with your line manager and related to your continuing professional development. While professional qualification as a CRP does not currently exist, this may become available in the future. At the present time, the entry route to attaining accredited registration is through evidence of practice experience and confirmation of required education and training. Progression from firstly demonstrating that you meet the Standards of Proficiency for registered CRPs can be built upon through confirming this annually. Then subsequently gathering evidence on your practice experience as it advances, ahead of when you will be asked to revalidate your registration. The time frame for this is anticipated to be around 3-4 years post-registration and will be confirmed in due course.

Standardisation across Trusts and roles

Competency development, banding and job descriptions are all matters that lie within the responsibility of local employers. There is no precedent to impose standard job descriptions and competency frameworks at national level. The development of the Scope of Practice and Standards of Proficiency do provide a mechanism that supports greater standardisation and describe what CRPs do. Reciprocal transfer of learning and sharing of resources across organisations is encouraged and supported by the NIHR and other national organisations.

Registration is a means of providing assurance that CRPs are committed to high standards of practice, can demonstrate their ownership of their professional development and support

for the CRP profession as a whole. The process should be seen as part of routine best practices in terms of staff review and development and not extra to it. The process is designed to promote reflection, learning and practice development.

How far back can you go when providing documented assurance of your practice? Can we use previous experiences for our reflections even if our current line manager was not our line manager at the time of the event we're reflecting on?

As we move back to more face to face working or hybrid working you may have more recent evidence to refer to. However if you are struggling to find recent examples from your practice you can go back to a maximum of three years.

You can use previous examples even if your current line manager was not your manager at the time. You will discuss your reflective statements with your line manager to demonstrate you meet standards of proficiency relating to your examples of reflective learning.

Competency frameworks

The use of competency frameworks and supporting tools, including the [NIHR Integrated Workforce Framework](#), enable a structured and evidenced based approach to skills and knowledge development in your role as a CRP. There is an expectation that CRPs will have used a relevant competency framework, or similar tool such as an induction framework, as part of professional development. There are examples included [on the CRP website](#).

If you haven't used a competency framework or similar, you need to discuss this with your manager and colleagues responsible for workforce development in your area. You will then be able to work through one of the available competency frameworks to ensure that you have the relevant skills and knowledge at the appropriate level before you proceed to making an application to the CRP Register.

Confirmation by your line manager that a competency framework, or equivalent evident based approach to knowledge and skills development is in place, is an essential requirement for registration as a CRP. You do not need to submit your development tool but you do need to ensure you have had the opportunity to work through a structured approach to knowledge and skills development before applying to the register.

Registration and impact on job tasks

Becoming a registered CRP will not change the tasks that you are able to do as part of your job. The specifics of your job role are something that you would need to discuss with your line manager and employer. Acceptance onto the accredited register confirms that you are

working to the standards of proficiency and scope of practice; it does not affect your contract of employment.

How does the accredited register compare to the GMC, NMC etc registrations

Accredited Registers are an established part of the regulatory landscape in the UK and sit alongside the statutory registers within the remit of the Professional Standards Authority. Choosing to join an accredited register when you don't have to shows your commitment to high standards and being accountable for your practice as part of an established professional group. We anticipate that as the register grows more employers may include registration as a desirable or essential component of job descriptions.

CRPs will receive a registration number when they are accepted onto the register and are able to use the PSA logo in their e-mail signature.

Sponsors have indicated their support for the development of the Register which brings CRPs within the established regulatory framework for health professions in the UK.

What do you see as the long term benefits/changes to be as a result of the CRP Register?

Before the work to establish the Directory and Accredited Register began CRPs were a disparate group with a weak professional identity and a general lack of visibility. The research delivery workforce was often described as being a predominantly nurse workforce with little mention of the value and contribution of 'non-nurses'. This landscape is already changing and one of the major benefits is that CRP roles are becoming more widely understood and there is visibility of the CRP profession. Enabled by the increasing commitment to Accredited Registration, CRPs are now becoming more visible as an essential part of the strategy for the long term sustainability of the research workforce. The profession has a voice to use to influence policy and practice. Registration provides a solid foundation by which CRPs demonstrate that they are committed and accountable for their own practice. The Directory and Register also provides a communication platform to share best practices and learning. As more CRPs step forward to commit to accountability for their own individual practice, development of CRPs as a profession as a whole can gather momentum. Taking collective ownership of the Register can then enable sustainability, ongoing development of standards and clearer career pathways embedded within the health and care system.

What are the benefits to individuals of being on the accredited register

- Professional status as a skilled, autonomous professional and recognised professional identity
- Reinforced professional competence
- You offer professional assurance and accountability to your employer, study sponsor, colleagues and participants

- You support the rise of the profile of the role, the development of the CRP profession and development of the CRP community of practice - the more CRPs join the register, the stronger the mechanisms will be in place to establish standardised career pathways
- Registered CRPs already have wider opportunities than those who choose not to register e.g. fellowships, access to courses, access to higher band positions that require registration or working towards it

Are there any standardised uniforms we can all use under all Trusts?

At the present time, experienced CRPs are a mix of registered and unregistered staff, wearing a variety of uniforms or none. Where it is considered a requirement that CRPs wear a uniform then this will be one that is appropriate for their role, and recognisable and relevant to the clinical context of the practice environment in which the research is being delivered. Considering a move to national standard NHS uniforms for England, based on current clinical structures, then this raises a general point around inclusion of new clinical roles and registered professions that are emerging and that will emerge in the future. Both Trainee and Registered CRP uniforms would need to be considered, perhaps bringing in additional features for clarity of identification. While alignment with the clinical scientist identification may indeed be appropriate for registered CRPs in the immediate term and context, the longer term position merits further exploration and an update will be posted on the CRP website.

How can we network with CRPs from other trusts to share experiences and drive the CRP professional identity forward?

The NIHR Learn Platform now includes a CRP Community space to enable connection and sharing of updates and experiences or to seek advice from your fellow CRPs. It is open to everyone on the CRP Directory and CRP Register and it is a fantastic way to collaborate with others within your profession.

To access the CRP Community Space on the NIHR Learn Platform, please use this link: <https://learn.nihr.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=815>

This site requires an access key, to access the enrolment key, please fill out this form: [NIHR Learn CRP community](#).

How long does it take to complete the registration process

There is no set time frame as this will depend on a number of factors including ensuring that the applicant has discussed their application with their line manager as part of their professional development process. The most important factor is that the process is truly owned by the applicant and sufficient time is given to understanding the requirements and the process of reflection and learning that lies at the heart of the application process.

It is difficult to say how long it takes as it varies. If all evidence is easily accessible, the application form can be completed in several hours, but if there is a need to evidence competencies first then it will take longer, and perhaps some weeks or months to schedule time for this in agreement with managers and professional colleagues supporting the applicant.

Please find guidance for CRPs and managers on the CRP website (including a step by step description of the application process). <https://nihr.ahcs.ac.uk/faqs/>

Do I need to complete a DBS before I submit my entry?

As part of the sign off process by your line manager you will need to confirm that you have a current DBS certificate.

Revalidation

CRPs will be required to confirm a self-declaration to AHCS to renew their registration each year and furthermore will be asked to follow a process to fully revalidate, in line with processes followed by other health and care professions. The time frame for revalidation is anticipated to be around 3-4 years post-registration and full details will be confirmed in due course. The annual renewal process is straightforward and requires the applicant to confirm that they are still meeting the requirements and are committed to undertaking their own professional development.

Revalidation will follow the process for nurse revalidation and require the applicant to demonstrate their continuing commitment to high standards through a process of reflection that will include their line manager and professional colleagues. Registrants who have entered the register through the experience route will follow the same process as their colleagues.

There is no prescribed amount of CPD defined for registered CRPs. Being part of the register provides an opportunity to take a planned approach to undertaking learning and development and keeping records of that. You will be asked to provide assurance about CPD as part of the annual renewal of registration and you could be asked to submit your CPD portfolio to the Academy Registrar.

<https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/our-registers/hcs-register/continuing-professional-development/>

What's the difference between the CRP Directory and the Accredited Register for CRPs?

The CRP Directory supports a community of practice for Clinical Research Practitioners and provides the foundation for ongoing development of the CRP Profession.

To be listed on the CRP Directory, CRPs must be working in a research delivery role in the UK that involves direct contact with patients or other study participants, or leadership or management of such roles and normally not registered to a healthcare profession.

The CRP Accredited Register is part of the Professional Standards Authority's accredited register programme that supports over 90,000 practitioners across different health and care occupational groups.

CRPs wishing to join the CRP register will need to meet defined standards of proficiency and provide evidence of this that has been confirmed locally before submission to the AHCS.

Who can sign off your application?

Your line manager or a senior manager is required to sign off the whole application as this provides confirmation of assurance.

The professional development conversation within the document of assurance needs to be signed off by a statutory registered professional and their PIN or Registration Number is required.

Can I apply to the register if I work in the devolved nations?

Yes, the register is open to applicants from across the UK.

Will the Register become mandatory

Accredited Registers are voluntary by nature. However, choosing to join a voluntary register demonstrates your own commitment to high standards and the development of the CRP Profession. There is an expectation that as the Register grows, employers may include the requirement to join the Register as part of job descriptions. This may then become established in due course as normal best practice, and there is ongoing engagement with all relevant stakeholders in relation to regular review of this topic.

HR/employment issues

The development of the CRP Register has put the spotlight on a number of issues around HR practices and other employment issues, such as contracts, ESR records, banding and CRP job descriptions. These issues can affect all professions and roles within research delivery teams and are being explored further through collaborative strategic development initiatives, informed by intelligence shared. We encourage networking and communication through the established channels in relation to this topic. If you have a specific query or concern, please contact workforceandprofessionsCRN@nihr.ac.uk

How can we get our Trusts on board?. What work can be done to help trusts understand the Register and the HR consequences?

The development of the CRP Register is part of a strategy to develop the identity of the CRP Profession. Like any change process it will be challenging to some people. Taking time to explain why the Register has been developed and how it will help trusts demonstrate their commitment to high standards and support for their workforce is important. Accredited Registers are part of the UK regulatory landscape and it is important to ask seniors what they don't understand about it. Local NIHR Clinical Research Network colleagues can also be approached for advice. Contact workforceandprofessionsCRN@nihr.ac.uk for information on who to get in touch with.

What proportion of the research delivery workforce are currently CRPs?

There is significant diversity of CRP roles and improving available workforce intelligence continues to be a priority. In relation to research delivery roles funded or part-funded by the NIHR Clinical Research Network, data analysis suggests that around 20-25% are CRP roles.

Is there any shorter, clearer way to explain our roles to educate patients and public.

This [CRP leaflet](#) can be shared with anyone who may wish to know more about the CRP role. Additional resources will be available shortly to enable communication with the public, including best practice for self-introduction and how to describe your role and boundaries of your care responsibilities for participants, according to the research study protocol.

Do you have any suggestions for training/development support for CRPs

A number of opportunities may be available to you locally, and also nationally, and it is important to discuss your training and development needs with your line manager. Local NIHR Clinical Research Network colleagues can also be approached for advice. Contact workforceandprofessionsCRN@nihr.ac.uk for information on who to get in touch with.