



# AHCS<sup>®</sup>

Academy for Healthcare Science

**This guide explains how to apply to the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) for a Certificate of Equivalence for the Scientist Training Programme (STP).**

You can apply if you can show that your knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours are comparable to those of someone who has completed the 3-year STP training programme through the National School of Healthcare Science. Your evidence must also show that you meet the standards in Good Scientific Practice (GSP) and the learning outcomes of the relevant curriculum. GSP standards support safe and effective practice for healthcare scientists and align with the Health and Care Professions Council standards for Clinical Scientists.

**Equivalence means that you can show you have achieved the same level of knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours as someone who completed the STP training programme route, even if you followed a different route.**

The AHCS equivalence process recognises learning from your qualifications, training, work experience and continuing professional development. If you can evidence the required outcomes, you do not need to repeat formal STP training. This route is for people who have not completed an STP accredited by the National School of Healthcare Science, but who can show comparable learning and practice.

**You can only apply for STP Equivalence if there is a relevant accredited STP curriculum for your specialism!**

# **AHCS Guide for Applicants:**

## **Certificate of Equivalence Scientist Training Programme (Clinical Scientist)**

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## Eligibility

You must live and work in the UK. You must also have at least 3 years' experience in the UK at Band 6 or above, in an area that matches the specialism you are applying for.

A qualification, job title or pay band is not enough on its own. You must show, with evidence, that your knowledge, skills, experience and practice meet the required level.

You cannot apply for STP Equivalence while you are enrolled on the NSHCS STP Training Programme.

Your application is assessed against:

- **The standards set out in AHCS [Good Scientific Practice \(2025\)](#)**

**AND**

- **The relevant accredited [STP curriculum](#) for the year you are applying.**

You must be able to show that you:

- meet [GSP](#) at the level expected of a Clinical Scientist;
- have a minimum 3 years' UK professional experience with breadth and depth comparable to someone who completed the relevant [STP curriculum](#);
- choose portfolio evidence that reflects the core, rotation and specialist learning outcomes in the relevant [STP curriculum](#). You do not need to map every piece of evidence to every curriculum outcome.

You do not need to hold a master's degree. However, your evidence must show knowledge, skills and behaviours at master's level, including UK clinical workplace training.

## Who should not apply

1. People who do not live and work in the UK.
2. People who are not working at Band 6 or above, or who have less than 3 years' UK work experience.
3. Former STP trainees who did not complete the STP, unless they can show they have taken action to address the reasons they did not complete. As a guide, you should normally have at least one further year of training or experience, but AHCS considers each case individually.
4. People currently enrolled on the NSHCS STP Training Programme.

**There are no exemptions from the eligibility criteria or other parts of the process. Patient safety remains paramount. In exercising its gatekeeping responsibility for entry to the HCPC Register through the equivalence route, the AHCS must apply the eligibility requirements rigorously, consistently and fairly.**

## Before you apply

1. Read and understand the STP Equivalence guidance on the AHCS website:  
<https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/equivalence/equivalence-guidance/>.

Read and understand [AHCS Good Scientific Practice \(2025\)](#).

2. Read the relevant [NSHCS STP curriculum](#).

Before you apply, discuss your plans with your line manager, mentors and colleagues. Your line manager must sign off your Personal Statement and Portfolio when you submit them. These conversations can also help you choose suitable referees.

You may also wish to speak to your professional body. Other routes may also allow you to apply to the HCPC for registration as a Clinical Scientist.

### **Remember:**

- ***You and your line manager should read and understand this guidance before you apply for STP Equivalence. The application fee is non-refundable.***
- ***More guidance is available on the AHCS website*** [Equivalence Guidance - The Academy for Healthcare Science \(ahcs.ac.uk\)](#)
- ***You will find dates for the drop in Q&A sessions for all equivalence applicants at:*** [Drop-in sessions - Equivalence and Clinical Research Practitioners - The Academy for Healthcare Science \(ahcs.ac.uk\)](#)

If you have any queries about the application process, please contact the AHCS Administrators at [equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk](mailto:equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk)

## Alternative routes to HCPC registration

The AHCS STP Equivalence route assesses your evidence against [Good Scientific Practice](#) and the relevant accredited [STP curriculum](#).

There are two other equivalence routes that may allow you to apply to the HCPC for registration as a Clinical Scientist.

These routes are offered by:

- [The Association of Clinical Scientists \(ACS\) – route to ‘Clinical Scientist’](#)
- The Institute of Biomedical Sciences (IBMS) – [‘Experiential route to HCPC Registration’](#).
- If you are fully trained and qualified overseas and want to register as a Clinical Scientist in the UK, contact the HCPC about its [international registration route](#).

# Good Scientific Practice

Please read [AHCS Good Scientific Practice](#).

## 1. The purpose of Good Scientific Practice

Good Scientific Practice (GSP) sets out the professional standards expected of the healthcare science workforce. Its purpose is to support safe, effective and high-quality practice, with patient safety as the main priority.

GSP also helps employers understand the standards of behaviour and practice that staff must be supported to meet and maintain.

GSP is based on HCPC standards and other professional standards. It explains these standards in a healthcare science context.

The following sets out core principles for NHS services in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland:

[NHS Constitution for England](#)

[Charter of Patient Rights & Responsibilities under Patient Rights \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)

[NHS Wales' Values & Standards of Behaviour](#)

[Northern Ireland Patient Standards & Rights Framework](#)

NHS bodies and some providers of NHS-funded services must take it into account in their decisions and actions.

GSP has five domains:

**Domain 1: Professional practice** – Patient-centred care; Scope of practice; Communication; Professional responsibilities; Working with others.

**Domain 2: Scientific practice** – Data and reporting; Technical proficiency; Quality assurance.

**Domain 3: Clinical practice** – Clinical activity; Clinical investigation and therapeutics

**Domain 4: Research, development and innovation** – Research activity; Service development.

**Domain 5: Clinical leadership** – Developing self; Leading others.

GSP helps different groups in different ways.

For patients, carers and the public, it explains the standards of care and service they can expect.

For employers, it supports staff to meet high professional standards.

For healthcare science staff, it shows that their work is based on professional practice, conduct and patient safety.

For educators of the healthcare science workforce, it provides a professional framework to inform the design and delivery of education programmes, including to ensure that

future members of the workforce are prepared to engage with and meet high standards of professional practice.

For the National School of Healthcare Science, it provides a professional framework for all education and training curricula and assessment and for accrediting academic and work-based training providers.

For trainees and members of the workforce who undertake further education, training or professional development, it articulates the professional standards that they will need to meet within their new scope of practice.

GSP underpins the AHCS Equivalence assessment process. For STP Equivalence, it provides the standards against which your evidence is assessed.

As a key part of its public protection role, the Academy uses GSP in cases of fitness to practise, where the conduct or actions of a registrant on one of our Professional Standards Authority-approved registers has been questioned.

### **Using GSP as a registrant**

GSP sets the standards and values you must meet throughout your healthcare science career, within your scope of practice and role.

GSP explains the difference between your scope of practice and your job role. Your job may be narrower than your full competence.

Working to GSP shows patients and employers that you are committed to high standards. Even if you do not work directly with patients, your work may still affect patient care.

Some GSP standards may not apply to every role or level of practice at all times. The standards explain which parts of the workforce they apply to. This should guide your practice, not limit it where you are competent and it fits your role.

As your career develops, some standards will ask more of you. All standards share the same aim: to protect patient safety and support high standards of care.

## **Why we use GSP in STP Equivalence**

### **Background**

GSP sets the professional standards for safe and effective healthcare science practice. These standards support good behaviour, professionalism and patient care.

GSP uses HCPC standards as benchmarks and explains them in a healthcare science context.

### **GSP and the STP Equivalence process**

The STP Equivalence Programme is approved by the HCPC as a route to registration as a Clinical Scientist. Since approval in 2014, AHCS has used GSP as the basis for assessment.

### **Why we use GSP**

We use GSP because:

- GSP was designed and reviewed by healthcare scientists, for healthcare scientists.

The standards are written and expressed within the context of healthcare science. The standards promote the identity of the healthcare science professions and reflect their central role in NHS diagnostics and therapeutics.

- GSP applies across the healthcare science workforce and helps applicants understand the standards expected at their level of practice.
- AHCS can update GSP to respond to changes in good practice and regulation.

In STP Equivalence, you must show that you meet GSP through your portfolio and interview. You must also show knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours comparable to someone who completed the accredited STP.

The STP is a master's level programme. Your portfolio and interview must show that you can work at that level. This includes being able to:

- deal with complex issues systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- demonstrate reflection, self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- continue to advance knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level
- having a systematic understanding and critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is informed by the forerunners of equivalent professional practice
- undertake independent critical analysis of current research and knowledge;
- have originality in the application of knowledge
- demonstrate a practical understanding of how established techniques of enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- evaluate methodologies and approaches, critique evidence and, where appropriate, propose new hypotheses; and
- engage with complex scientific and clinical roles, including high-risk, low-volume activities that require highly skilled staff to exercise clinical judgement in complex situations.

The AHCS Education, Training and Standards Committee and External Examiner have supported the continued use of GSP in STP Equivalence.

## Equality and diversity

AHCS values the contribution of every individual. We are committed to an inclusive culture where everyone is:

- enabled and encouraged to participate fully;
- treated with dignity and respect, based on merit, ability and potential; and

- valued for their positive contributions.

We use equality monitoring data to review Equivalence outcomes and improve our processes. You can find more information in the AHCS equality and diversity policy on the Academy website.

If you have a disability that may affect your application or assessment, contact AHCS before you submit your application at [equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk](mailto:equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk). AHCS can advise you about reasonable adjustments.

## Overview of the STP Equivalence process

Your application has four stages. You must complete each stage successfully before you can move to the next one.

### Stage 1: Initial application

If you need reasonable adjustments, contact AHCS at [equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk](mailto:equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk) before you submit your application.

AHCS will advise you about the support available.

1. Prepare your portfolio and evidence before you apply. Use the guidance and templates on the AHCS website: <https://ahcs.ac.uk/equivalence/equivalence-guidance/>.
2. When your portfolio is ready, create a profile at <https://app.ahcs.ac.uk/> and select New Application/STP Equivalence.
3. Complete the Personal Details section.
4. Pay the non-refundable fee before you continue. Check the current fee at <https://ahcs.ac.uk/equivalence/what-is-the-cost/>.
5. Complete all remaining sections marked with a red x. See [Appendix 1](#) for section-by-section guidance.
6. Upload your portfolio and evidence, then select COMPLETE APPLICATION.
7. Your manager will receive an email asking them to review your portfolio and confirm whether they agree with it. If they disagree, AHCS may ask you for more information by a set deadline.
8. If your manager agrees with your portfolio, your application moves to Pending Admin Review. AHCS will check that each section is complete and that you have uploaded the correct documents in the correct format.

After the admin review, you will receive one of these outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: your application moves to assessment.**
- **Outcome 2: AHCS asks you to do more work for admin review.**
- **Outcome 3: your application is rejected. AHCS will tell you why.**

## Stage 2: Portfolio assessment

A Specialist Assessor reviews your portfolio. The usual review period is 28 days. The Specialist Assessor will be from a relevant specialty and will be a registered Clinical Scientist working in the same division as you.

Assessors must declare any conflicts of interest. AHCS will make alternative arrangements where needed. See [Appendix 2](#) for more information.

The assessor will give one of these outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: you are invited to interview.**
- **Outcome 2: AHCS asks you to do more work within a certain timeframe, which the Specialist Assessor will review.**
- **Outcome 3: your application is rejected. AHCS will tell you why and advise the earliest date you could reapply.**

## Stage 3: Interview

Your interview takes place by videoconference and lasts about one hour. A panel of three assessors interviews you: a Specialist Assessor, a Professional Assessor or Moderator, and a Lay Assessor. Where possible, the Specialist Assessor who reviewed your portfolio will also be on your interview panel. See [Appendix 3](#) for more information.

## Stage 4: Ratification and certification

This stage includes the following:

- The outcome of your interview is ratified.
- You are notified of the outcome.
- The HCPC is notified of the outcome.
- You receive Certification from the Academy if the outcome is one of successful completion.

As a successful applicant, you are eligible to apply to join HCPC's Register as a Clinical Scientist once Stage 4 Ratification has taken place. See [Appendix 4](#) for further information.

Your progression at each stage depends on you achieving a successful outcome. Guidance documents and the digital portal support you throughout the process, from starting your application through to interview.

If you need further advice, drop-in Q&A sessions are available to all equivalence applicants. Check the AHCS website for dates and registration details: [Drop-in sessions - Equivalence and Clinical Research Practitioners](#).

For further advice, please contact [equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk](mailto:equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk).

**Please note: The Academy is unable to advise whether you meet the criteria for applying. You must determine this by reading the available guidance.**

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own” (English Oxford Dictionary). It can include submitting someone else’s work word-for-word as your own, taking significant portions of text from a single source without alteration or acknowledgement, or changing key words and phrases while retaining the essential content of the source without due acknowledgement (Turnitin 2018). The AHCS regards plagiarism as both unethical and unprofessional.

The Academy recognises that applicants may follow a similar structure for their portfolio and draw on a range of material when compiling evidence. However, any part of your application that requires original comment or thought must be your own work, with appropriate acknowledgement of any sources used. These requirements apply to your personal statement, summary report and supporting evidence.

If instances of plagiarism are suspected or identified in your application, they will be investigated formally by the AHCS and may lead to your application being rejected.

## Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Equivalence

The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is growing rapidly. AI can be used for a range of purposes, including generating ideas, supporting planning and management, and providing information. Further examples are available in the government guidance on [Generative Artificial Intelligence in education](#). However, Generative AI can be used in both ethical and unethical ways.

In the context of assessment, unethical use of Generative AI may be considered a form of plagiarism and, if identified, may lead to rejection of an Equivalence application.

For further details please refer to the relevant guidance statement:

[Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in AHCS Equivalence](#)

## Maintaining confidentiality

Your application for STP equivalence, portfolio and evidence must only include information that it is appropriate for you to share. You must not include any information that compromises patient confidentiality or the confidentiality of another third party (e.g. a colleague). **Inclusion of patient identifiable information will result in an automatic Outcome 2.**

Just as in other areas of your professional activity, you need to ensure that you do the following:

- Comply with the requirements of [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#).
- Uphold the trust that patients, colleagues, your employer and the public place in you.
- Demonstrate your fulfilment of [Good Scientific Practice](#) *in relation to confidentiality*.

If you draw on material as evidence sources that include others' personal data (e.g., a witness statement) or information that is potentially business-sensitive (e.g., a business case relating to a service development initiative), you must redact all details that could make individuals (patients or colleagues) or a service or organisation identifiable. Please then save your document in PDF format so that track changes cannot inadvertently be used to reveal the deleted information.

**If you include any colleague email addresses or other contact details, you must first secure the individuals' permission for this information to be provided and confirm in your portfolio that you have secured their permission.**

## Detailed guidance on each stage of the process

You must make your application online via the AHCS website: <https://app.ahcs.ac.uk/>

You will receive system-generated emails at various points as you progress through the application process. You should check your junk mail folder and set your email rules to ensure that you receive these emails promptly.

Deadlines are set for each stage of the Equivalence assessment process and are notified to you by email. You must meet these deadlines. If you do not, your application will be rejected and you will need to reapply, including paying the fee again.

If you wish to request an extension to a deadline because of exceptional circumstances, you must contact [equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk](mailto:equivalence@ahcs.ac.uk) at the earliest opportunity and declare the extenuating circumstances. Extensions are granted at the discretion of the AHCS and are based on the circumstances presented.

The appendices provide detailed guidance on each section of the application form. Please read them carefully so that you understand the process and provide the correct documentation. This will help avoid your application being returned or rejected.

## [Appendix 1 – How to complete your Initial Application \(section by section\)](#)

Click the link above for detailed guidance on how to complete your initial application, to include the following sections:

- Personal Details
- Payment
- Guidance
- Professional Identity
- Education & Training
- Career Detail
- Documents
- Good Character and Health
- Personal Statement
- Declaration
- Portfolio

## [Appendix 2 – Assessment of your portfolio](#)

Click the link above for detailed guidance on how your portfolio is assessed and the possible outcomes you can be awarded.

## [Appendix 3 – Your interview](#)

Click the link above for detailed guidance on the interview process and to read the Applicant Guidance document.

## [Appendix 4 – Ratification and certification](#)

Click the link above for detailed guidance on the ratification process.

## [Appendix 5 – Examples of Evidence](#)

Click the link above examples of evidence you can use in your application.