

Accredited Registration for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs) – Guidance for Managers & Registered Professionals supporting applicants

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Introduction

This guidance is for managers and registered professionals supporting their Clinical Research Practitioner (CRP) colleagues to make an application to join the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) accredited register. Your involvement in the application process is essential. The application process is designed to promote reflection and learning and to integrate with your local approach to supporting CRP development.

What is the purpose of the CRP register?

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 health and care occupations that are not part of a statutory register. 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 the increasing numbers of skilled practitioners working alongside clinical colleagues as part of research delivery teams. CRPs are critical to the development of a vibrant future UK workforce and the NIHR's ability to deliver high quality research.

The process of developing the register has depended on building a community to connect CRPs and provide a way of sharing best practices. This work has helped to shape an increasingly shared understanding of the role and broader awareness of the contribution of CRPs. Developing the professional identity of CRPs takes time and commitment and a recognition of the strategic importance of attracting and retaining CRPs in the research delivery workforce. The register will continue to play a role in this strategic development of the research workforce.

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 technically skilled practice. 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 [Professional Standards Authority Accredited Registers programme is supported by NHS Employers](#) and is described further in relation to assurance of the wider NHS workforce.

Background

CRP Register Development

The CRP Register is a joint initiative between the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN) and the AHCS. A working group, including lead nurses, NIHR CRN Workforce Development Leads and CRPs, shaped the content of the Standards of Proficiency, Scope of Practice and the supporting evidence required for application to the CRP register. The application process is designed to enable a more standardised and consistent approach to supporting CRPs in their learning and practice development, including continuing professional development, across all settings. A proportionate approach based on risk assessment and the principles of 'right-touch' regulation informed the iterative development of the CRP register.

An oversight group within the NIHR Clinical Research Network provides strategic direction and connection with workforce development initiatives across the NIHR. Within the AHCS, the CRP Register Quality and Assurance Group is accountable to the AHCS Registration Board.

The AHSC accredited register 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.

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.

CRPs working within the current research delivery workforce are often graduates, but not always, and a significant number also hold post graduate qualifications. The first phase of opening the register has been restricted to applicants who hold a minimum educational requirement of a first degree or equivalent educational attainment. Applicants are required to evidence this by uploading educational certificates as part of their application. A process for highly experienced CRPs who do not hold a degree to access CRP registration is anticipated to be in place before the end of 2022.

The CRP Directory

All applicants to the CRP register will firstly be expected to be listed on the Academy's CRP Directory as a first step to setting their intention to seek professional registration. The CRP Directory serves as a pre-registration space to support the applicant community and will provide access to information and help to serve the growing community of CRPs as a new professional group.

The CRP Directory is currently free to join. The fee to join the CRP Register is £30. AHCS fees apply at joining and are reapplied annually thereafter to cover the administration costs incurred by the AHCS. The registration fee is non-refundable should an application not meet the required standards.

What you need to do to support an application

1. Deciding when to apply?

This will not normally be within the first year of practice. There is an expectation that making an application to the CRP Register is integrated into the annual appraisal process for CRPs. Before joining the register, CRPs should have successfully completed their induction and reached a level of competency development that enables them to demonstrate that:

- They are working comfortably at practitioner level and aligning to Level 5 of the [Skills for Health Career Framework](#);
- They are meeting the CRP Standards of Proficiency;
- They are familiar with the CRP Scope of Practice and;
- They are clear about their own individual scope of practice.

To provide further support on deciding when to proceed with an application to the CRP Register, NIHR CRN Workforce Development colleagues have developed an [outline reference table guide](#), which refers to the standards required of CRP registrants. This table is based on the format of [Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\) standards provided by the AHCS](#) and these CPD criteria may be useful as a guide to making an evaluation of evidence you may be reviewing prior to confirming an application to the CRP Register. If the potential CRP registrant has not met all the criteria they will not be eligible for registration and therefore, the intention of this resource is to provide outline guidance on what evidence is needed, how to assess this evidence and to support feedback on what is required if the standard has not been met.

2. Developing and supporting CRPs in your organisation

One of the benefits of the continuing development of the CRP Community is the growth of local support structures and other mechanisms. There are good examples of local networking as well as the development of induction and competency frameworks and other tools that support CRP development. These tools include the NIHR Integrated Workforce Framework resource ([IWF](#)).

Links to all CRP Register templates and guidance resources are accessible through the [AHCS Website](#).

As part of the application process you will need to confirm that the applicant is working to a competency framework or a similar evidence based framework that supports knowledge and skills development. There is a growing use of the IWF Framework to support continuing review and role development across the defined elements of all CRP roles. The preparation required to support CRP registration provides an ideal opportunity to review local approaches, and to share and learn from colleagues across the national research infrastructure.

3. Practice Development

Evidencing elements from the CRP Scope of Practice and Standards of Proficiency

Applicants are responsible for completing three structured reflections. These should demonstrate:

- Understanding professional accountability and limitations
- Their leadership advocacy for research and the CRP profession
- Two examples of working across boundaries, addressing permissions accordingly in relation to their role

The reflective accounts are purposefully linked to the CRP Scope of Practice and Standards of Proficiency and are designed to provide opportunities for reflection and learning that can be shared as part of continuing development conversations.

Practice development conversation

The applicant must have a development discussion with a registered professional covering their practice knowledge and experience. The conversation should include a focus on the clinical context of the applicant's work, including clinical skill development and relevant factors that relate to the specific work setting. The conversation provides an opportunity to identify specific development needs.

The design of this part of the application process seeks to recognise that CRPs need to have a clear understanding of the clinical context of their role and have continuing opportunities to develop their clinical knowledge and skills according to the specific context of their role.

The applicant is also required to identify two examples of feedback they have received as part of the development conversation.

Communication style assurance

Applicants are asked to provide evidence that their communication style has been observed and confirmed as appropriate. Where this is relevant the observation should include receiving informed consent.

4. Confirmation of registration requirements by line manager signature

Line managers are required to provide confirmation across four areas of evidence;

1. Confirmation that the applicant has a current DBS Certificate and required English language proficiency
2. Confirmation that the applicant that the applicant is meeting the requirements of a Competency Framework or equivalent evidence based approach to knowledge and skills development
3. Confirmation that the applicant meets your organisation's statutory/mandatory training requirements for CRPs
4. Confirmation that you have seen the applicant's portfolio of evidence in relation to practice development. This includes the applicant's portfolio of evidence and practice development discussion. The practice development discussion takes place between the applicant and a registered health professional and in many cases this will be the line manager if you are a registered health professional. Practice development conversations and review provide valuable opportunities for learning and reflection across the team.

The table below provides a summary of the two signatures required and the purpose of each. Please ensure that you have completed the required information in relation to contact and registration details as these may apply. By providing line manager confirmation you are agreeing to be contacted by the AHCS for the purposes of verifying information included in the application.

Signature	What is being confirmed?	Who signs?	Comments
1	CRP Register application overall	The line manager, on behalf of the employing organisation*	*Line manager responsibility for signing may need to be escalated for signature on behalf of the organisation confirming validity of documented assurance being provided.
2	Practice development conversation	A statutory registered healthcare professional who knows the CRP and is familiar with their practice**	**The line manager may also be signing this section if they are a statutory registered professional. If not, another statutory registered healthcare professional must be involved.

What happens when applications are submitted?

On receipt of an application, the AHCS will first perform administrative checks and process the 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 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.

Once applications have been reviewed by the Academy applicants will be notified of the result. This could include a request to submit additional information within a defined timescale. Registrants will be issued with a certificate and instructions on how to use the PSA logo to confirm they are a member of an Accredited Register.

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 for clarification and/or supplementary information for further consideration.

Continuing commitment to CPD

All members of the CRP Register agree to maintain up to date records, together with supporting documents or other evidence of the Continuing Professional Development they undertake. The Academy can ask for evidence of this as part of a CPD audit of registrants.

How to contact the AHCS

The involvement and engagement of the community that manages and supports CRPs is essential for the success of the register and associated objectives that will enable the continued growth in this section of the research workforce in a planned and strategic way.

We welcome your input and perspectives on any aspect of this initiative. Please get in touch through either of the key contacts below.

Key Contacts

AHCS | crpadmin@ahcs.ac.uk

NIHR | workforceandprofessionsCRN@nihr.ac.uk