

Guidance Notes for Experienced Practitioner Gateway Panel Assessment Members

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Background

The Register for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRP) is part of the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) Accredited Register. The Register for CRPs was launched in April 2021 following a successful application to the Professional Standards Authority (PSA).

The CRP Register is set at level 5 of the Skills for Health Career Framework to reflect the level of experience, knowledge and responsibility required for CRP roles. Practitioners can solve problems creatively in a managed rather than supervised environment, relying on their own judgement, actively contributing to service development and often holding responsibility for staff supervision and training. Practitioners in the NHS workforce will normally be expected to hold level 6 higher education as defined by the UK government qualifications framework. These qualifications include degree, graduate certificate, and graduate diploma.

A proposal to open a process to widen access to the CRP Register to experienced practitioners without level 6 qualifications on a time-limited, exceptional access basis was agreed by the AHCS in September 2022. A successful application to the gateway will provide the opportunity for experienced CRPs to progress to submit an application to the CRP Register in the standard way. The Registration process is exactly the same for CRPs who have passed through the gateway as it is for their colleagues who have level 6 qualifications.

Who is the gateway for?

- The gateway is for experienced CRPs who are able to evidence that they have a minimum of three years working at the level of practitioner. All applicants to the gateway will need to discuss their intended application with their line manager and colleagues to ensure that they are working at the right level before submitting their application.

What is the application process?

- Applicants need to be part of the AHCS CRP Directory before starting their application. Being part of the Directory will demonstrate commitment to the CRP community and provide access to up-to-date information and opportunities to connect.
- Applicants need to discuss their intention to apply to the CRP Register via the Gateway with their line manager and confirm their eligibility through engaging with guidance documents. Applicants will also be asked to submit evidence about their educational qualifications and ongoing learning and development that will support their application.
- Prepare the required documentation to include:
 - Experience and Education template including line manager confirmation signature
 - Current job description
 - Level 5 Certificate (if applicable)
- Complete the required fields on the AHCS Experienced Practitioner Gateway Portal and upload documentation.
- Pay the £10 non-refundable administrative fee

What happens after the gateway application is received by the AHCS?

Applicants will be emailed by the AHCS portal system to confirm receipt of their eligibility application and may be asked to provide further information if the submission is incomplete.

Each application will be reviewed and follow one of two routes:

Route one: Meets gateway criteria without panel assessment

Applicants that are able to provide evidence that they have been working for a minimum of 5 years at the level of practitioner and have achieved level 5 education or equivalent (such as a foundation degree or HND) will receive confirmation by email of eligibility to progress to apply to join the CRP Accredited Register.

Route two: Panel assessment

Applicants with less than 5 years' experience working at practitioner level and without level 5 education will go for assessment by a panel to determine gateway eligibility. The panel will include a representative from the AHCS and a minimum of two representatives who have knowledge and experience related to the CRP role and career pathways.

Applicants will be informed of the date of their panel assessment and when they can expect to hear the outcome.

In cases where the panel concludes there is insufficient evidence to meet gateway criteria, applicants will be contacted by the AHCS and provided with information about the decision. Applicants will be able to appeal panel decisions using the published process.

Applicants that meet the gateway criteria will receive an email confirming access to progress with their application to join the Register.

Process for the panel assessment

The process for the review of applications needs to be proportionate and take into account that the process is a review of eligibility to put in a register application, not an application to join the register. The process is therefore intentionally light touch and focused on an assessment of experience. It is anticipated that involvement of one panel will include approximately 2-4 hours involvement over a 4–6-week period. This includes 1-2 hours to review an agreed number of applications and attending a two-hour meeting.

Review of CRP Eligibility Form

Members of the panel will be allocated an agreed number of applications to review. This will normally be between 5 and 10 applications. The key document for the review is the CRP Gateway Eligibility Form. This form is designed to capture information about the applicant's current role and their career pathway in research delivery.

The focus of assessment is the evidence that confirms the applicant has been working at the **level** of practitioner for the required minimum of three years. This evidence should be easily identified in the description of their current role. Responsibility for supervising and managing others, leading studies and involvement in the informed consent process are all examples practitioner level responsibilities.

Applicants are also asked to upload their current job description, and this may also provide useful information about the level the applicant is working at. However, job descriptions can be misleading as the applicant may be working at a different level to that outlined in their job description.

Applicants are also requested to include information about the highest level of education achieved and relevant learning and professional development. This information also provides a useful context.

Each applicant also has to include a signature from their line manager that confirms there is support for the application. If there is no signature, the reviewer should inform the administrator.

In many cases the evidence will be clear, and assessors will be able to confirm that the applicant can pass through the gateway. This can be recorded in the assessment form.

In cases where there is less clarity, for example where the applicant appears to have been working for less than three years at practitioner level then the assessor can request that the application is discussed at the panel meeting

Panel meeting

The panel meeting provides the opportunity for peer support and moderation of any applications where an agreement cannot be reached. The panel will be supported by the CRP administrator and include members from AHCS, NIHR and the CRP -verifiers group.

Panel meetings will be online and are expected to take place over a two-hour meeting. Only those applications where there is a lack of clarity about eligibility will be discussed.

Communication with gateway applicants

Following the panel meeting applicants will be informed by email of the outcome. Successful applicants will be encouraged to complete their application to join the CRP Register within a six-month period.

Support for panel members

Panel members will be given training and support. All members will be asked to sign a contract with the AHCS around confidentiality

For more information please contact: crpadmin@ahcs.ac.uk