

Experienced Practitioner Gateway to Clinical Research Practitioner Registration – 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) Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Accredited Register for CRPs but do not have a [level 6 or above qualification](#) (e.g. a university degree). It explains how to make an application to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway, which is a requirement for all CRPs applying to the Register who do not have a level 6 qualification. This guidance should be read alongside the [Scope of Practice for CRPs](#) and [Standards of Proficiency for CRPs](#).

The Scope of Practice for CRPs and Standards of Proficiency for CRPs were created by the AHCS in partnership with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the NHS research community. These documents formally demonstrate CRP skills and bring forward their professional potential to meet the high expectations of patients, the public, and the research ecosystem.

What is a CRP?

CRPs are a vital part of the research workforce. They work in the United Kingdom within research delivery roles that have a patient/participant facing element within clinical environments and other health and social care settings. Their role titles include Clinical Research Practitioner, Clinical Studies Officer, Research Practitioner, Clinical Trials Practitioner, Clinical Trials Officer, among others. CRPs are not currently required to be part of a statutory professional register to perform their role.

For more information about the role of CRPs, please refer to the [Scope of Practice for CRPs](#).

Clinical Research Nurses and Allied Health Professionals working in research delivery may also define themselves as Clinical Research Practitioners. However, if these professionals are already on a statutory register, becoming a registered Clinical Research Practitioner is not an efficient use of their time. Their existing registration already provides the necessary benefits and public assurance.

The AHCS Accredited Registers Programme

In the UK, the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) accredited registers programme sets the requirements for the AHCS Accredited Registers programme. [Accredited Registers](#) have been established for a number of recognised professional groups and the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs was approved by the PSA in April 2020.

It is part of the AHCS's accredited registers programme and sits within an established governance framework. The AHCS 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.

Ongoing development of the Register continues as a joint initiative between the AHCS and the NIHR Research Delivery Network (RDN). An oversight group within the NIHR RDN provides strategic direction and connection with workforce development initiatives across the NIHR.

The PSA Accredited Registers programme is supported by NHS employers. [This article explains the role of the PSA and how it can help employers in the NHS to improve regulation and safety standards.](#)

What is the Purpose of AHCS PSA 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 statutory registered profession.

The AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs helps to protect patients and individuals participating in health and care research by contributing to maintenance of high standards. If registrants fail to uphold the required standards, or show they are not fit to practice, their circumstances will be reviewed, and they may have their registration status removed.

For CRPs, the additional benefits of CRP registration are to:

- Be recognised as a skilled healthcare professional;
- Demonstrate their personal commitment to high standards and continuing professional development;
- Encourage them to take an active role in supporting the evolving professional community of CRPs;
- Contribute to a more consistent and informed understanding of CRP roles;
- Provide structured opportunities for reflection, learning and improvement, and;
- Raise awareness of the Scope of Practice for CRPs, Standards of Proficiency for CRPs and evidenced based tools that support continuous professional development for CRPs.

Applying to the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs

Who is Eligible?

CRPs are members of the research delivery workforce, working in clinical environments and other health and social care settings. If there is any uncertainty about whether an individual is a CRP,

please refer to the [Scope of Practice for CRPs](#), which outlines the scope of practice for CRPs working in the delivery of research in the NHS 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](#). Further information about what this means is provided below. It is the level that an applicant is working at, rather than the job title or Agenda for Change band that determines a CRP's eligibility to join the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs.

The Register is intended for experienced CRPs who have developed their skills and knowledge over time. It will normally take one to two years of working in a CRP role to reach a practitioner level and standard of practice. CRPs applying to join the Register are expected to have been working at this level of responsibility for at least one year.

By joining this voluntary register, CRPs are making an active choice to take part in the developing CRP professional community.

What Does Working at Practitioner Level of the Skills for Health Career Framework Mean?

CRPs working comfortably at practitioner level / level 5 of the [Skills for Health Career Framework](#) will be expected to have a comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within their field of work and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge. Please refer to the [Scope of Practice for CRPs](#) for further information about the scope of practice.

CRPs working at practitioner level as described above will be using their knowledge and professional judgement to solve problems proactively, making decisions for which they will be accountable, and actively contribute to the service they work in. They will also proactively seek self-development.

The research delivery activities undertaken by a CRP working at practitioner level will often be self-directed and are likely to include some or all of the tasks listed below:

- Seeking ongoing informed consent as a voluntary agreement with research study participants, ensuring their understanding of the research and its risks
- Identification, screening and randomisation of research study participants
- Involvement in clinical research operations, development, regulation and ethics processes
- Proactively engaging with colleagues in relation to research study design and implementation and evaluation
- Proactively ensuring high quality data input at source and its management through a research workflow
- Contributing to the appraisal of evidence gathered in the context of delivering a research study
- Contributing to the reporting and dissemination of research study results
- Proactively communicating across boundaries to maintain relationships that secure investment in research across all clinical specialties and care settings

The [Standards of Proficiency for CRPs](#) set out the **minimum** standard a CRP must meet to apply to the Accredited Register for CRPs and maintain their registration. Some of the key standards of proficiency required are listed below. Please refer to the [Standards of Proficiency for CRPs](#) for information about all 16 standards in detail. Overall, a Registered CRP will:

- Reflect critically and continuously on performance or situations and actively seek feedback from colleagues and research study participants, adapting practice as required to meet the diverse needs of research study participants
- Communicate effectively with research study participants, their relatives and carers and colleagues
- Contribute to planning and monitor/review the ongoing effectiveness, modifying as and when necessary in a changing environment, identifying and managing sources of risk in the workplace
- Lead confidently across networks and have a deep understanding of the research delivery system and research being part of core business in health and social care
- Demonstrate credibility, confidence and resilience, and the ability to lead in times of rapid change, actively participating in activities to promote the CRP profession and its contribution to research
- It will normally take one to two years of working in a CRP role to reach a practitioner level and standard of practice. CRPs applying to join the Accredited Register for CRPs are expected to have been working at this level of responsibility for at least one year.

Applicants Without Level 6 Qualifications

The first phase of opening the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs was restricted to applicants who held a minimum educational requirement of [a level 6 qualification](#).

A proposal to widen access to the Register to experienced practitioners without [level 6 or above qualifications](#) was agreed by the AHCS in September 2022. This process is called the [Experienced Practitioner Gateway](#). It provides an exceptional access route to the Register for CRPs with significant experience in the delivery of health and care research.

The Experienced Practitioner Gateway process requires applicants to have been working at the practitioner level described above for at least three years. When applicants have achieved this level of experience, they can submit an Experienced Practitioner Gateway Eligibility Form (validated by their line manager) with descriptions covering the past three years to the AHCS to consider the eligibility of their application.

A successful application to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway allows experienced CRPs to apply to the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs in the normal 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 Experienced Practitioner Gateway for?

The Experienced Practitioner Gateway is for experienced CRPs who can demonstrate that they have a minimum of three years working at the level of practitioner of the [Skills for Health Career Framework](#) described above. It will normally take one to two years of working in a CRP role to reach a practitioner level and standard of practice.

You must discuss your application with your line manager and colleagues to ensure you are working at the right level before submitting your application.

You must be listed on the [AHCS's CRP Directory](#) as a first step indicating your intention to seek professional registration.

The CRP Directory

The CRP Directory provides valuable information to support CRPs applying to the Register, as well as information that helps to serve the growing community of CRPs as a new professional group.

Anyone in a CRP role, regardless of experience, can join the CRP Directory through self-declaration. The AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs is for experienced CRPs and to be accepted CRPs need to provide a portfolio of evidence demonstrating that they meet the requirements for registration. The table below provides a summary of the key differences between the CRP Directory and the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs.

Name	Who can join?	Benefits	Comments
CRP Directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Anyone working in a patient-facing research delivery role who is not already on a professional register	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Community of practice- Strengthens professional identity and future intent- Searchable listing – open visibility of CRP status- Builds credibility with employers and the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Access to a quarterly CRP Bulletin- Access and contribution to shaping the CRP profession

AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working in a patient-facing research delivery role who is not already on a professional register; and - Holds a level 6 qualification or has passed the Experienced Practitioner Gateway; and - Holds sufficient training and practice experience to meet the standards for registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulatory body - Confirms professional practice meets a defined standard and that this continues through ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) - Protects public, employer and individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Next steps will enable CRP leadership of a professional body for CRPs
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Making an Application to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway

This section explains what you need to do to apply to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway.

Pre-reading

You should read the following information before you make your application:

- The documentation provided on the [How We Handle Concerns page](#) of the AHCS website; and
- The Accredited Registration for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs) – Guidance for Applicants on the [Standards, Rules & Guidance page of the AHCS website](#), which lists the declarations CRPs are required to make as part of their application for registration.

The Experienced Practitioner Gateway to CRP Registration Eligibility Form

Current Role Duties and Responsibilities

You must provide a description of your duties and responsibilities as a CRP, demonstrating at least three years of experience at the practitioner level of the Skills for Health Career Framework described above. Most CRPs working at this level undertake some or all of the tasks described. If necessary, you can also provide descriptions from other relevant jobs you have had in the past five years.

Don't just copy the list of activities from your job description. The people reviewing the eligibility form need to understand your regular duties - how you apply job description in practice.

You must also explain how you have developed to the practitioner level of practice.

Your answer must be between **200 and 500 words**, regardless of how many jobs you discuss. For example, if you have multiple roles to discuss in this section, your whole answer needs to be no more than 500 words long.

Employment History

You must list the clinical research roles from the last 10 years, in chronological order. For each role, please include the role title, employing organisation and approximate start and end dates. Include all relevant roles that form part of your clinical research experience.

This information will be used to check that you have been working at the practitioner level of the Skills for Health Career Framework for **at least three years**.

Length of Time Working at Practitioner Level (Must be at Least Three Years)

Your response to this question will be cross-checked against the information provided elsewhere in your application.

Please provide your response in months and years.

Highest Level of Educational Attainment

This question is for academic qualifications relevant to your research role. For example, a Level 4 or 5 qualification. You don't need to apply to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway if you have a Level 6 or above qualification.

Please include the qualification level, name, subject, award date, and the awarding organisation (e.g., school, college, or university).

Leave this question blank if you don't have relevant academic qualifications.

Other Learning

Learning can be completed in a variety of different ways, such as work shadowing, peer review and carrying out a lessons learned exercise as well as completing formal training courses. Please read the Continuing Professional Development: Standards and Guidance document available on the [AHCS website](#) for further information about this.

This question is about the other learning you have completed, excluding any statutory, mandatory or study specific training.

Statutory training is required by law on the basis of legislation e.g. Health and Safety legislation. Good Clinical Practice (GCP) is the agreed international standard for conducting clinical research. GCP training is required by law for researchers (including CRPs) working on research studies. In view of this, statutory training is not considered part of your professional development and should not therefore be included in your response to this question.

Mandatory training is compulsory training that is determined essential by an organisation for the safe and efficient delivery of services e.g. hand hygiene. Mandatory training not directly related to your practice (e.g. fire training) should not be included in your response to this question because it does not develop you as a healthcare professional. However, if you undertake mandatory training that is relevant to your scope of practice and professional development, such as training on equality awareness and eliminating bullying and harassment, you can include that.

Study specific training - only relevant for a specific study e.g. training on how to complete a study-specific data collection form. Study specific learning is unlikely to have any wider use beyond the scope of the study and should not be included in the Other Learning section because it does not develop you as a healthcare professional.

Study related training - relevant to a study you worked on and your overall development as a healthcare professional, such as training about research inclusion. This type of learning can be included in the Other Learning section because it develops you as a healthcare professional and is likely to improve your research practice.

Please list the learning and continuing professional development (CPD) you have completed in the **last three years** of your research career in the table provided. This should be listed in chronological order and include:

- Any modules or education credits completed;
- Research and education training related to your role; and
- CPD that has prepared you and continues to support you in your CRP role.

Registered CRPs are expected to keep up to date records and supporting evidence of their CPD. We therefore expect to see CPD that has prepared you and continues to support you in your CRP role, typically an average of two pieces of learning completed each year over the last three years.

Suggestions for CPD can be found on the [CRP Community Google site](#).

Mandatory and Statutory Training

You must confirm that your mandatory and statutory training is up to date. Failure to confirm this will result in your application being rejected.

Applicant's Declaration

You must place a cross in each of the boxes or highlight each of the relevant statements on the form to confirm your agreement.

Line Manager's Confirmation Checklist

Your line manager must place a cross in each of the boxes or highlight each of the relevant statements on the form to confirm their agreement. They must also provide their contact details so the AHCS can contact them with any questions or feedback about your application.

Job Description(s)

You must upload a copy of your current job description(s) on the employing organisation's headed paper:

- If you have worked in your current role at the practitioner level described above for at least three years, you only need to upload your current job description.
- If you have NOT worked in your current role at the practitioner level for at least three years, you must upload your previous job description(s) to demonstrate that you have worked for three years at that level.

The AHCS and application reviewers will check your job descriptions demonstrate that you are expected to be working at the practitioner level. In **exceptional cases**, if the job description(s) don't accurately reflect your working level or you are unable to provide previous job descriptions, the AHCS may, at its discretion, accept declarations from you and your line manager instead of a suitable job description. The alternative declarations available on the eligibility form confirm that the applicant has been working at the practitioner level for at least three years, despite the job description not demonstrating this. If this applies, your line manager should provide an explanation in their declaration.

Level 5 Qualifications (if applicable)

If you have a [level 5 qualification](#) relevant to your research role you must upload a copy of it with your application.

If the name on your qualification(s) is different to the name on your eligibility form, you should also upload a change of name certificate.

What to Consider When Putting Together Your Application to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway

Ensure Your Eligibility Form Does Not Contain Any Personal Information

Apart from the required declarations in support of your application, you must ensure that you do not include any information that might identify any other 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 other individual can be identified from the information.

Your form must not include:

- The department or place where a particular event took place;
- The name of any individual; or
- Any description of a circumstance from which an individual could be identified.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence to Draft Your Application

Information about the AHCS's guidance for applicants using generative artificial intelligence for their application to the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs is available on the [AHCS website](#). If you intend to use generative artificial intelligence to help you with your application, we strongly recommend that you read the guidance about this. Applicants found to have used generative artificial intelligence in an unethical way may have their application rejected and be prevented from applying to the Register for two years.

Review Our Anonymised Templates

To help you complete your application, you can view anonymised examples of successful Experienced Practitioner Gateway applications on the [AHCS website](#).

Speak to a CRP Engagement Lead

We strongly recommend that you discuss your application with one of your local [CRP Engagement Leads](#).

Disabilities That May Affect Engagement in the Application and Assessment Process

If you have a disability, as defined under the Equality Act (2010) that you feel may affect your engagement in the application and assessment process, please contact the AHCS Administrators before submitting your application; crpadmin@ahcs.ac.uk.

The AHCS can then advise you on reasonable adjustments.

What Happens When You Submit Your Application to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway?

You will need to:

- Login to the [Clinical Research Practitioner Portal](#);
- Complete the required fields;
- Upload the documentation requested; and
- Pay the non-refundable administrative fee.

Further information about how to use the [Clinical Research Practitioner Portal](#) is provided in the Accredited Registration for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs) – Walkthrough of Application Process document available on [the AHCS website](#).

Once your application has been submitted, you will receive an email confirmation. The administrative team will first review it for completeness before it undergoes formal assessment to determine your eligibility.

There are three potential outcomes for applications to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway:

1. **Application successful** - Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria will receive an email confirming they can progress with their application to join the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs.

You should submit your application to join the Register **within six months** of receiving this email. This timeline is intended to support the continued growth and sustainability of the Register and to demonstrate your commitment to patient safety and your own professional development. If you need longer than this, please email the AHCS to request this.

2. **Further information** – If your submission is incomplete, the AHCS may request further information from you and/or your line manager. You should resubmit your application **within 28 days** of this request. If you need more time, please email the AHCS.

Make any updates to your eligibility form in red font to clearly show the new information.

Ask your line manager to check the updates then you should both re-date the applicant's and line manager's declaration boxes before resubmitting the form.

3. **Rejected** - If your application does not meet the eligibility criteria it may be rejected.

The AHCS will inform the applicant and line manager why this is the case to ensure awareness of the Experienced Practitioner Gateway's eligibility criteria.

In certain circumstances, an appeal can be lodged against the decision. Applicants are advised to read the appeals guidance before doing this as specific conditions must be met before AHCS can consider an appeal.

AHCS Fees

Information about the AHCS's registration fees is provided on the [AHCS website](#).

AHCS fees apply for applying to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway and joining the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs. The application and registration fees are non-refundable and will therefore not be refunded if an application does not meet the required standards.

After registration, fees are reapplied annually for registered CRPs to cover the administration costs incurred by the AHCS, which is a not-for-profit organisation.

Further Information and Advice About the Gateway and Applying for Registration

Further information about applying to the Experienced Practitioner Gateway and applying for registration is available on the [Clinical Research Practitioners Learning and Development Framework on NIHR Learn](#).

You can also speak to one of your local [CRP Engagement Leads](#).

How to Contact the AHCS

If you have any questions about the Experienced Practitioner Gateway or CRP registration in general, please contact us using the details below:

AHCS | crpadmin@ahcs.ac.uk