

Guidance Notes for Experienced Practitioner Gateway Assessors

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1.0	Final Document for publication	Milly Brittain	December 2022
1.1	Changes to reflect new Experienced Practitioner Gateway Process	Milly Brittain	December 2025

Background

The Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Accredited Register for CRPs was launched in April 2021 following a successful application to the PSA.

The Register is set at practitioner level / 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. In the NHS, practitioners are usually expected to hold level 6 or above education, as defined by [the UK government qualifications framework](#). These qualifications include degrees, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas.

In September 2022, the AHCS widened access to the CRP Register to experienced practitioners without level 6 qualifications. This route to registration is known as the Experienced Practitioner Gateway ('the Gateway'). A successful application to the Gateway allows CRPs to apply to the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs in the standard way. The Registration process is the same for CRPs who successfully passed the Gateway as it is for those with level 6 qualifications.

Who is the Experienced Practitioner Gateway for?

The Gateway is for experienced CRPs who have worked at the practitioner level of the [Skills for Health Career Framework](#) for at least three years. Further information about what 'practitioner level' means is provided below.

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](#) on the [AHCS website](#) 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 via the Gateway are expected to have been working at this level of responsibility for at least three years.

What is the application process?

Guidance for applicants about the application process is provided in the Experienced Practitioner Gateway to Clinical Research Practitioner registration – Guidance for applicants document available on the [AHCS website](#).

Eligibility requirements

Applicants must work with their line manager to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements before applying. They must meet the following criteria to apply:

- **Be listed on the AHCS CRP Directory.** This shows commitment to the CRP community. It provides access to information about registration and opportunities to connect with other CRPs.
- **Have line manager support.** This is confirmed by the line manager completing and signing the Confirmation Checklist at the end of the Eligibility Form.
- **Demonstrate at least three years of practitioner-level experience,** as described in the [Skills for Health Career Framework](#). This is evidenced via a description of current duties, employment history in clinical research roles from the last 10 years, and job descriptions covering the last three years.
 - Job descriptions are not required for the past three years if the line manager confirms:
 - Departmental or organisational policy constraints mean the job descriptions don't accurately reflect the applicant's work; or
 - The applicant cannot obtain job descriptions for some or all their previous roles.
 - Line managers can provide other reasons for consideration by the AHCS on a case-by-case basis.
- **Demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional development.** We expect an average of two relevant learning activities per year for the past three years (excluding statutory, mandatory, or study-specific training).
- **Be up to date with mandatory and statutory training.** This is evidenced by the line manager confirming the Eligibility Form content is correct.

Applicants are also asked about level 5 qualifications relevant to their research role. While not required to pass, additional qualifications can help establish the applicant's level of knowledge.

Submitting the application

Applicants must:

1. Complete the Experienced Practitioner Gateway to CRP Registration Eligibility Form available on the [AHCS website](#). The applicant's line manager must check the form, then complete and sign the Confirmation Checklist
2. Complete the required fields on the AHCS Experienced Practitioner Gateway Portal and upload:
 - a. The Eligibility Form
 - b. Job descriptions from the last three years (if possible)
 - c. Any relevant level 5 qualifications
 - d. Proof of name change (if the name on the application differs from the name on any qualifications).
3. Pay the non-refundable administrative fee

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

The AHCS:

- Confirms receipt of the application
- Checks all required information has been provided, and requests further information if needed before sending the application for assessment
- Sends the application to an Experienced Practitioner Gateway Assessor

Support for Gateway assessors

Gateway assessors will be given training and support by the AHCS.

All assessors will be asked to sign a contract with the AHCS to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

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

Reviewing applications to the Gateway

The review process for applications is designed to be proportionate. Its purpose is to check if an applicant is eligible to apply to the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs, not to approve their registration directly. The process is therefore intentionally simple and focuses on assessing the applicant's experience.

The key document to review is the Experienced Practitioner Gateway to CRP Registration Eligibility Form. This form captures information about the applicant's current role and their career pathway in research delivery.

Applicants are also asked to upload job descriptions from the last three years. These can provide useful information about the level the applicant is working at. However, job descriptions might not always reflect the applicant's actual working level, and, in some cases, applicants might not have access to historic job descriptions.

Information about relevant research qualifications, learning and professional development is also requested and provides useful context.

The applicant's line manager must sign a confirmation checklist. This confirms the applicant meets the eligibility requirements and they support the applicant's application for registration. If the checklist has not been completed or signed and dated, please email the AHCS administrator at crpadmin@ahcs.ac.uk.

Checklist for eligibility

An Excel checklist is provided to help assessors determine if an application is acceptable. In many cases, the evidence will be clear, and assessors will be able to confirm that the applicant can pass through the Gateway. Successful applicants should meet all the requirements listed on the checklist.

If an application is not successful, the applicant must receive feedback explaining why. If the applicant's line manager should have identified problems with the application, they can also be sent feedback to help prevent similar problems in future applications they support.

Application outcomes

- **Outcome 1: Pass** - Applicants will receive an email from the AHCS confirming their eligibility to proceed with their application to join the AHCS PSA Accredited Register for CRPs. The registration application should be submitted within six months.
- **Outcome 2: Further information required** – The AHCS will email applicants to request further information. Usually, 28 days is allowed to respond but extensions can be requested. Any new information must be provided in red font to highlight the updates.
- **Outcome 3: Reject** -The AHCS will inform the applicant. If the rejection is due to insufficient experience, the AHCS will inform the applicant when they can reapply. Applicants have the right to appeal the decision using the published appeals process.