

Higher Specialist Scientist Training Programme 2019

Frequently Asked Questions for Applicants

Release 1.0

IMPORTANT:

These FAQs are as up to date as possible for the period of issue (see front of document). They will be subject to further updates over time. Applicants are advised to regularly check the FAQs to ensure that they have the most up to date information on the process.

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1 Application and eligibility

Q1. What is the difference between Health Education England (HEE) Local Team commissioned direct entry and HEE Local Team commissioned in-service posts, and which applies to me?

- A. Commissioned Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) posts can be “direct entry” (by competitive appointment into a *newly established HSST post*) or “in-service” (reserved appointment in which the identified applicant is already in employment and is supported by their employers throughout the training).

Direct entry applicants: new posts created specifically for the purpose of training and open to competition by application. NHS employees wishing to access this entry route must be prepared to resign from their existing post if they are successful in gaining a place. Applicants follow the whole programme full-time (except for any exemptions) during which they hold a fixed-term five-year training contract of employment with the host organisation.

Please refer to the following link and click on ‘How to Apply’ to access the online application portal

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training>

In-service applicants: existing clinical scientist posts are used by employers to support nominated individuals for HSST as long as they reach the entry standard for HSST. They must hold a substantive contract of employment in the NHS specialism for which they are applying.

Please refer to the following link to access the in-service online application portal

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training/applying-to-the-programme>

You will need a code from your employer in order to commence your application form. The National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS) will supply the code to employing departments. (Please ensure you apply against the in-service vacancy only)

Q 2 How do I apply?

- A. All applicants should view the information available on the NSHCS website before submitting an application. This will advise applicants on the HSST specialisms and training available for direct entry applicants. Please refer to the following link to access the online application portal <http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training/applying-to-the-programme>

Q 3 What are the timescales for recruitment?

- A. The timescales for recruitment can be accessed through the NSHCS webpages at:

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training>

We strongly encourage you to complete your application form as early as possible. **No late applications will be accepted.**

Please note, in-service applicants will *not* go through the shortlisting process but will progress straight through to interview for benchmarking and recommendation for appointment. All in-service applicants will be invited to attend interviews at the same time as the direct entry applicants.

We advise all applicants to avoid taking annual leave during the interview period in the event should an applicant be invited to interview as alternative interviews will not be offered.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome after all interviews have been completed.

Q 4 What do I need to be eligible for the HSST programme?

- A. *Normally* at least one further year in the workplace to consolidate and enhance clinical scientific skills, learning and experience (including research and education) and the ability to demonstrate meeting any additional specific selection criteria required for a particular specialism at interview

Registration (or eligibility and application underway) with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as a clinical scientist.

Those applicants who are appointed to HSST programmes but who are in the process of applying for equivalence and/or registration (but have not yet achieved it) may **not** start their programmes until they are registered with the HCPC. Applicants will need to ensure they have the process of equivalence and /or registration with the HCPC underway at the time of application. If invited to interview, applicants will be asked to produce evidence of HCPC registration or that the process for registration is underway. Please note for those applicants that have yet to achieve clinical scientist registration, as a minimum the NSHCS will expect applicants to be registered with the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) and a process of equivalence underway with them at the time of application.

Applicants should be aware that confirmation of equivalence can take several months to complete and may require submission of significant amounts of evidence. It is very important that applicants commence this process early on so there is sufficient time to gain registration by the intended start date for the programme. Failure to do so may impact on their ability to commence and continue on the training.

Q 5 How many posts can applicants apply for?

- A. **Direct entry applicants** may only apply to one specialism which they will indicate on their application form.

In-service applicants will only be able to apply for a place for HSST within the context of their current clinical scientist post and for which they have been nominated for by their employer.

Please refer to the person specification which is provided on the NSHCS website at:

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training/about-the-programme>

Q 6 What happens with applicants who already have a doctorate or have undertaken leadership or management programmes?

- A. Higher Education Institutions (HEI) have agreed that there will be a process to recognise prior academic learning (APL) where this is appropriate, although university regulations do *not* allow research or dissertations submitted previously for a degree to be used in submitting for another.
- B. Those who hold a Ph.D. and which is recognised by the NSHCS as both timely and relevant to the trainee's pathway may choose not to undertake the research component of the doctoral programme. However they will then *not be eligible* to receive the full award of DClinSci but will be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Certificate in Leadership and Professionalism and a certificate of completion of HSST

Q 7 How can I get my previous experience recognised and apply for registration with HCPC as a clinical scientist?

- A. If you are applying for a HSST post and are not already registered with the HCPC as a clinical scientist you must apply for a Certificate of Equivalence through the AHCS. The AHCS provides assessment of the equivalence of people's existing qualifications and experience against the outcomes of the Modernising Scientific Careers programmes. The Certificate of Equivalence confers eligibility to apply for appropriate registration e.g. statutory registration with HCPC as a Clinical Scientist. Further details of the application process can be found on the AHCS web site at:

<http://www.ahcs.ac.uk/equivalence/apply-for-equivalence/>

Applicants for HSST who are not registered as a clinical scientist with HCPC are advised to start the process of seeking equivalence at least at the same time they apply for the programme in order to offer sufficient time to complete all equivalence activities prior to commencement of the programme.

Q 8 Is there an age limit for applying to HSST?

- A. There is no age limit for applying to an HSST programme.

Q 9 How can I find out more about the progress of my application?

- A. If you are invited to the next stage, you will receive your invitation via email and/or text. You can also log on and check your progress via this link. <https://www.oriel.nhs.uk/Web/>

Q 10 Do you have the right to work in the UK?

- A. Where possible, applicants must establish their right to work in the UK before applying.

If you require a tier 2 visa to work and train in the UK as a healthcare scientist, we strongly advise you to visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk for the latest information.

Q 11 English language competency is required?

- A. It is essential that all applicants have the required level of communication skills to enable them to undertake the role effectively and to assure the delivery of safe services to patients.

There are a number of ways you can demonstrate that you meet the English language requirement, for instance:

- be a national of a majority English speaking country or have worked in an organisation/institution where English was the primary language used for communication;
- pursued as part of your education in the UK;
- hold a degree or relevant educational qualification that was taught in English by a recognised institution abroad;
- pass an English language competency test.

Applicants whose first language is not English will also be required to satisfy the Higher Education Institution (HEI) that they have the necessary knowledge of English to meet the entry requirements to enrol on to the doctoral programme associated with the HSST programme.

Individuals from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) who make an application under Tier 2 of the points-based immigration system will be required to demonstrate their English language ability as part of the visa application process. You will therefore need to provide evidence that you have passed an appropriate test listed by the Home Office

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

Q 12 If I have not previously trained in the UK, what further information will I need to provide?

- A. Applicants must be able to demonstrate they are able to achieve the standards of proficiency outlined for Clinical Scientists by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). For more information you should visit the website:

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=42>

2 The selection process

Q 13 How will the recruitment process work?

- A. Both direct entry and in-service applicants must undertake the application and interview process. For direct entry applicants the interview is competitive; for in-service applicants it is for benchmarking and appointment.

Please note that late applications will not be considered.

Both direct entry and in-service applicants apply via the online application portal accessed via a link on the NSHCS website at:

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training/applying-to-the-programme>

Any applicant queries regarding the recruitment process can be emailed to hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk. This mailbox is manned during normal office hours of between 09:00 hours to 17:00 hours Monday to Friday.

We do **strongly** suggest that during the application window stage, you **do not** leave any queries regarding the submission of your application form to the last day as we cannot guarantee we will be able to respond to your query before applications close. Therefore we urge that you complete your application form in advance of the closing date for applications and submit any queries regarding the application process in advance of the closing date of applications but **no later** than the day before closing date of the application window.

The interview venue is Birmingham City Football Club, B9 4RL and there is free parking at this venue. For direct entry applications only, allocations to posts will commence as soon as possible after all interviews have been completed. In-service applicants will also receive notification around this time if their application has been successful or not.

Q 14 How will the shortlisting process be carried out for direct entry posts?

- A. Shortlisting will be carried out on a national basis by appropriate professional panels which will be representative of employers, and professional bodies.

Panel members will shortlist against agreed criteria, based on the skills, knowledge and values required for the HSST programme, and will score applications independently.

Scores will be ranked and those individuals with highest scores invited to interview.

Q 15 Who will inform direct entry applicants that they have been shortlisted?

- A. The NSHCS will inform direct entry applicants whether they have been shortlisted and will provide the dates of the interviews for the specialism.

In-service applicants will not go through the shortlisting process and will proceed directly to interview for benchmarking and recommendation for appointment.

Applicants must be ready to respond promptly (within five days) to invitations to interview to confirm their place. Applicants will then be able to book interview slots online.

Note: please be aware that applicants will not be reimbursed for the travel costs associated with attending interview.

Q 16 What is the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)?

- A. The Guaranteed Interview Scheme is a commitment to guarantee an interview to anyone with a disability (as defined in the Equality Act 2010) who meets the minimum criteria for the job. All disabled applicants through NHS Jobs are offered the option to request the GIS and the NSHCS offers this in line with NHS Jobs/NHS employers.

Q 17 How do I request the Guaranteed Interview Scheme?

- A. Disabled applicants wishing to apply under the GIS will need to tick the 'yes' box on the online application form in answer to the GIS question.

There is no obligation for a disabled applicant to apply under the GIS if they do not wish to.

Q 18 Will there be a GIS question on the application form?

- A. Yes. Under the registration and personal details section of the application form applicants will be asked the following:

*If you have a disability, provided you meet the minimum criteria as specified in the Person Specification, do you wish to be considered under the *Guaranteed Interview Scheme?* (Please refer to the Applicant Guide.):*

- If an applicant selects 'No' no further questions appear.
- If an applicant selects 'Yes' then the following question appears:
- If you have answered yes to the above question, please give details below:

If, on your application form, you have indicated that you have a disability and require any specific arrangements/adjustments to enable you to attend an interview, assessment or

other selection process and/or you have indicated you would like to be considered under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, please ensure you contact the recruitment lead (hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk) with further information and supporting evidence by completion of the shortlisting process.

Q 19 How many applicants will be shortlisted for each direct entry post?

- A. Approximately three times as many applicants for direct entry posts will be shortlisted and invited to interview in addition to any applicants eligible for the GIS. A reserve list of applicants will also be identified equal to the number of available posts in that specialism, which will be drawn upon if higher ranked applicants fail to confirm their interview place, or subsequently withdraw from the process.

Q 20 Where and when will the interviews be held?

- A. Interviews will be held in Birmingham. The interview timetable can be found through the NSHCS webpages at:
<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training>

Please note: Applicants will *not* be reimbursed for their travel costs.

Q 21 If an applicant is not able to attend the interviews on the date they have been allocated will they be offered an alternative date?

- A. It is unlikely that there will be any flexibility on the dates applicants are invited to attend the interview. The dates of the interviews for each specialism will be made available early on in the process.

Q 22 Will in-service applicants have to go through the national application process?

- A. Yes. In-service applicants are required to complete the online application form, and demonstrate they have the support of their employer to ensure that they have the appropriate skills and experience for the training scheme.

3 General questions

Q 23 Is the training programme right for me?

- A. You should refer to the general careers information available on the Health Careers website, details of the curricula available on NHS Networks, and the Scaling for Heights document to evaluate whether you think the training programme is right for you. You are also advised to seek advice from clinical and academic mentors if at all possible.

General information about careers in healthcare science <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/hsst>

The HSST curricula are available on NHS Networks using the link below:

<http://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/msc-framework-curricula/hsst-higher-specialist-scientist-training>

The Scaling for Heights document is available by accessing the link below:

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/images/guidance/reports/hsst/Scaling-the-Heights-final.pdf>

Q 24 How much will I be paid during the training?

- A. Employers will set the salary for both the direct entry and in-service posts that they are providing.

Employers will also attract a training allocation of £13,000 per year for each Clinical Scientist in a HEE Local Team commissioned HSST post. This funding will be used by employers to cover the costs of the doctoral training programme and other training costs.

Q 25 How will I know if my training centre is eligible to have a HSST trainee?

- A. Trainees can only be appointed to centres that meet the NSHCS standards for accreditation established for HSST training. Partnerships and consortia arrangements may be necessary in the case of smaller centres and the NSHCS will be able to advise on individual cases. If an employer wishes to support HSST for one of their clinical scientists, they must have achieved or be part of an accredited programme in order to do so.

Q 26 Where will I be trained?

- A. For direct entry, training posts for 2018 are limited to specific training departments which will be accredited through the NSHCS. You should also note that in accepting an offer of training you would be committing to being based with that employer for the full five years, unless secondment arrangements are required in order to deliver all of the training required by the curriculum.

Q 27 Am I guaranteed a job at the end of the training?

- A. If you have accessed the HSST programme through the direct entry route, you will be offered a **time limited** 5 year training and employment contract with the trust. There is *no* guarantee of subsequent employment by that employer on completion of the HSST programme.

For in-service trainees, assuming your employer agrees, it is anticipated that your ongoing employment with that employer will continue.

In both cases, satisfactory completion of the programme will make you *eligible* to enrol on the Higher Specialist Scientist Register (HSSR) and that in turn will make you *eligible* to apply for

available consultant clinical scientist posts, but there is no guarantee that such a post will be available or that you will necessarily be appointed to such a post.

Q 28 How long will the training programme last?

- A. The HSST is a five year, full time, employment based training programme during which participants may also study part time for a doctoral programme.

Q 29 Who will provide the doctoral programme?

- A. The Manchester Academy for Healthcare Scientist Education (MAHSE) consortium have been awarded the contract to deliver the doctoral level academic programme for HSST having been selected through a rigorous tendering and assessment process led by Health Education England (HEE).

Q 30 What experience is a HSST trainee expected to have?

- A. Individuals who enter HSST programme must be registered Clinical Scientists *at the start of the HSST programme*. Individuals may submit an application for the HSST programme whilst in the process of applying for equivalence to the AHCS or for registration with the HCPC.

Normally at least one further year in the workplace should be undertaken before entry to a HSST programme in order to consolidate and enhance clinical scientific skills, learning and experience (including research and education), although some specialisms may indicate that they require some further experience as a Clinical Scientist before being appointed to an HSST programme.

In addition, individuals should be able to meet any additional specific selection criteria for a particular specialism.

Q 31 Will I need to contribute to the academic tuition fees?

- A. No, HEE supports the academic fees for all HEE commissioned HSST posts to access the Professional Doctorate in Clinical Sciences.

Q 32 Where can I obtain further information about HSST?

- A. Information on the HSST is available on the NSHCS website:

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training>

Information on the application form:

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-the-programme/nhs-higher-specialist-scientific-training/applying-to-the-programme>

Information on the HSST Curricula can found at NHS Networks:

<http://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/msc-framework-curricula/hsst-higher-specialist-scientist-training>

Further information on the HSST programme can be obtained by accessing the link for Scaling for Heights paper at:

<http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/images/guidance/reports/hsst/Scaling-the-Heights-final.pdf>

If your question has not been answered by these FAQs please email:

hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk