

Recruitment process guidance for applicants to the Scientist Training Programme (STP) 2020

Read this guidance together with the Frequently Asked Questions on the National School of Healthcare Science website

<https://nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/knowledgebase/stp/applicants/faqs/>

Contents

- Introduction 3
- Definitions 3
 - Direct entry 3
 - In-service 3
- The programme 4
 - Entry requirements 4
 - Application period 4
- Applying for the programme 4
 - Before starting your application 5
- Oriel, the online application portal 5
 - How to register 6
 - Messages via Oriel 6
 - How to apply 6
 - The application form 7
 - Saving partially completed applications 7
 - False declarations 7
- Online aptitude tests 7
 - Technical difficulties 8
 - Reasonable adjustments 8
- Shortlisting and allocation to interview 9
 - Guaranteed Interview Scheme 9
 - Shortlisting outcomes 10
 - Choosing employers and locations 10
- Interview 10
 - Interview outcome and allocation process 11
 - Interview feedback 11
 - Special circumstances 12
- Fitness to practise 12
- Employment status and grade 12
- Feedback on the recruitment process 12
- Contacts and useful information 12
- Appendix 1 – How the special circumstances policy works 13

Introduction

The National School of Healthcare Science manages recruitment to the Scientist Training Programme (STP) in England. Health authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland manage their own STP recruitment. This document provides information to applicants on all stages of the recruitment process.

Definitions

Direct entry

Applicants entering the training programme from outside the NHS. If selected, you will follow the programme full time for three years under a fixed term training contract with your host organisation. As an NHS employee you can apply for direct entry, but you would have to resign from your existing post when you start the programme.

In-service

Applicants who are already employed by the NHS in the scientific specialism they are applying for. You will remain employed by your current employer throughout the programme. Your salary will be subsidised by Health Education England and you will be employed as a supernumerary trainee for the duration of the programme.

The programme

The STP is a three-year integrated training programme of academic and work-based learning. This leads to a master's degree in a healthcare science specialty, an advanced level of practical skills, and the right to apply for statutory registration as a clinical scientist. Full details of the programme, including the structure and range of scientific specialties, are available on our website.

Entry requirements

Read the person specification and job advert, to make sure you meet the eligibility criteria before you apply¹. Copies of both documents are available on our website.

Application period

Check the deadline dates before you start your application. Once confirmed, all deadlines are available on our website.

Applying for the programme

Your application consists of

- an online form in which you provide information about how you meet the person specification for the programme, including qualifications, experience and motivation
- an aptitude test which evaluates core skills needed for the programme

The information you provide is reviewed by short-listers against the requirements of the person specification. Any successful applicants will be invited to a national competitive interview event.

Advertisements for places on the programme appear in New Scientist magazine, our website, and the NHS jobs website.

¹ Non-UK applicants: the UK Borders Agency is responsible for the law covering immigration to the UK and you will need to confirm whether you are eligible before you complete our application form. Health Education England also provides guidance on its website for non-UK applicants to NHS training programmes. This includes applicants who are currently on or will require a Tier 2 visa. Applicants with a Tier 4 visa with any restrictions for example 'no employment as doctor or dentist in training' must stipulate this on the application form.

Before starting your application

Read all supporting documentation. Visit our website for guidance, frequently asked questions, person specification, curricula, application deadlines and all other necessary information.

Plan your time. Work out approximately how long it will take you to complete the application form. Take into account that you will need to get feedback from colleagues and that may take time. Try to avoid submitting your application at the last minute. Typically, 60% of applications are submitted in the last 48 hours, which slows the system down due to high volumes of traffic. Under no circumstances will late applications be considered.

Referees should be contacted as early as possible to confirm that they are happy to support the application and provide a reference. Referees will not be contacted until you pass the interviews and are allocated to a training provider.

If you are relying on projected qualifications, these will have to be achieved before the start date of the programme.

Oriel, the online application portal

All applications to the STP are made through Oriel, the online application portal. Oriel can be accessed on our website. Minimum browser requirements for Oriel are shown below.

Browser product	Version
BlackBerry	>=6
Apple Safari	>=7
Google Chrome	>=30
Microsoft Internet Explorer	9, 10*
	11
Microsoft Internet Explorer Mobile	11
Microsoft Edge	all
Mozilla Firefox	24-26*
	>=27

How to register

On Oriel select 'Account Registration' and create a user account. You can register on Oriel as early as you like but you will only be able to apply once the vacancy goes live. When you have registered, select 'Proceed to Applicant Registration' and fill in your details. These details are used to automatically populate parts of the application form when you apply for a vacancy. For example, fill in your employment history and this will be used in each of your applications. Oriel requires you to enter an end date for your current employment. So, if you are currently working and will have to hand your notice in to start the STP, enter the date 31st August 2020.

Messages via Oriel

We use direct messaging in Oriel to contact you about applications in progress. Regularly check your Oriel account to stay informed. We may also use the email address supplied to us, but your main source of information throughout will be Oriel.

How to apply

To apply for a vacancy in the location and specialism you want

- sign into Oriel
- search for 'Scientist Training Programme'
- select the vacancy you want to apply for and select 'To apply'

There will be two STP vacancies displayed, one for direct entry and one for in-service. Refer to the definitions at the beginning of this guide to understand the difference between the two.

Make sure you select the correct vacancy type for you. If you are not currently employed by the NHS, you would select a direct entry vacancy. Direct entry applicants cannot apply for the in-service vacancies. However, if you are an in-service applicant, you can also apply for a direct entry vacancy.

In-service applicants will receive a code from their employer. You will need the code to complete your in-service application form.

The application form

The application form has initial screening questions. You must meet the minimum eligibility criteria in order to be able to proceed with the application.

You must provide your

- personal data
- academic data
- work experience data
- general employment data
- equality and diversity data

You may have already provided some of this data when completing the full registration process.

You will then complete a series of short answer questions to demonstrate your suitability, understanding and motivation for the programme. If you are applying for more than one specialism, give equal space to each in your answer. Add any work experience, such as voluntary work, to the supporting information section. Once you have completed and submitted the application form, you will be directed to a link with instructions on how to complete the online aptitude tests.

Saving partially completed applications

You can save and return to your application as many times as you like, before submitting it.

False declarations

Any false declarations will invalidate your application.

Online aptitude tests

After submitting your application, you must take the online aptitude tests, in numerical and logical reasoning, before the set deadline. If you pass the tests, your application will go forward to shortlisting. If you do not pass, you will receive notification that your application has not been successful. Passing the tests does not guarantee you an interview.

You have only one opportunity to take the aptitude tests. We recommend that you visit the practice site www.trytalentq.com. You can learn more about the tests and how to prepare and try some practice

questions. You can take the practice tests as many times as you like.

When you have finished on the practice tests, you must complete your real test in one sitting. You access the online tests from the application summary screen 'My Applications' in the Oriel dashboard. You will first get an initial practice question, which is untimed. After that, there is a time limit for each question, and you cannot re-start the test.

We recommend that

- you make sure you are somewhere quiet and free from interruption
- you use a desktop PC or laptop to complete the online tests, and ensure you have a stable internet connection
- you close all other browser tabs, windows and applications before you begin
- when answering any question, do not click the 'back' button or refresh the page (if you do no marks will be awarded for that question)
- you make sure that it says 'completed' against each test before you log out of the system

Complete the tests as early as you can during the application window to ensure you do not miss the closing date. If you do not complete the tests on time, your application will be rejected.

Technical difficulties

If you experience technical difficulties during the aptitude tests, notify us at hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk with evidence. For example, a screenshot. If we accept the evidence, we will offer you a second opportunity to sit the test. We will not be able to do this if you have already completed the test. There is no technical cover available at weekends.

Reasonable adjustments

If you need extra time to complete the tests as a 'reasonable adjustment' under disability legislation, you must send evidence to hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk at least three working days before the test deadline.

Your evidence should consist of one of the following

- a Cognitive Diagnostic Report confirming your learning disability
- documentation from a healthcare professional confirming your requirement. This can be from a physiotherapist, optician or psychologist or similar and should be on headed paper and signed by the practitioner.

We will review your evidence and if justified, ensure you have extra time. Do not start the tests before you receive a response from us. We will not be able to make adjustments, if you do not notify us in good time.

Shortlisting and allocation to interview

If you are a direct entry applicant, your application goes through a shortlisting panel. They will score it against each of the criteria in the person specification, on a scale of zero (not met) to three (exceeded).

The panel members do not have access to your

- equal opportunities data
- fitness to practice data
- employment history sections of the application form
- personal data

To succeed, you must score at least two against each criterion. Applications are then ranked in order of their total score. In the event of tied scores, an algorithm is applied. This may include scores from the aptitude tests. The highest scoring applicants will then go through to interview. The shortlisting dates will be published on our website.

There are normally three interview places for each post, plus any applicants on the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (see below). There is also a reserve list, in case shortlisted applicants withdraw.

In-service applicants, even though you apply through the same process as direct entry applicants, your application does not go through shortlisting because you are not competing for a post. Once you have passed the aptitude test, you'll move directly onto the interview process.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

Applicants with a disability as defined by the Equality Act (2010), and who are confirmed through shortlisting as meeting the criteria in the person specification, will automatically be offered an interview. If you state in your application that you have a disability, and you wish to be considered for the scheme, you must email hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk with further information and supporting evidence, no later than the end of the shortlisting window.

Shortlisting outcomes

When shortlisting is complete, your status on Oriel will change to

- shortlisted – you will be invited to interview
- shortlisted reserve – you will be invited to interview, possibly at short notice, if a candidate in your chosen specialty withdraws
- shortlist unsuccessful – your application will not progress any further

Choosing employers and locations

After receiving your invitation to interview, you will be asked to choose where in the country you want to train. The term used in Oriel for these choices is 'sub-preferences'. Your interview score will be ranked, and this will be used, with your sub-preferences rank, to determine the training location you are allocated.

Direct entry applicants

The advertised training post locations and specialisms are available on our website. Post details may change during the recruitment process, so keep checking the website for the latest information.

You can only make one application per vacancy. If you try to submit more than one application for a single vacancy, you will be removed from the recruitment process.

In-service applicants

You do not need to choose a specialism or location. As an in-service applicant you can only apply for the training place, being sponsored by your current employer. You will need to provide evidence that you have obtained permission from your employer to apply. We will also ask for evidence of your qualifications.

Interview

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview. Visit our website for comprehensive guidance on the interview process.

Interviews are conducted at a single venue in one national event. When you apply to the programme, please make sure that you will be available for the published interview date. You will not be able to attend for interview on any other date.

You will have multiple mini interviews at a series of interview stations, each one evaluating a different aspect of your knowledge, skills and experience. The interviewers will give you a score.

Interview outcome and allocation process

After the interviews your Oriel status will change to 'interview complete'. We then check all interview scores, which may take up to two weeks. When we are ready to notify you of the outcome, your status will change to one of the following.

- offer made
- interview unsuccessful
- interview complete - your status stays at 'interview complete' if you are appointable but not ranked high enough to be allocated to a training centre at this stage. You will be placed on a reserve list.

If your status is 'offer made', you will be allocated to a training centre. Only one centre is offered to you. If it is not your first choice, you can 'hold' for a fixed period to see if something preferable becomes available. Once you accept a post, your acceptance is final.

After you have accepted an offer of allocation to a training centre, your details will be sent to them. They will then start their employment processes. You will be an employee of the training centre, and you will stay in their employment for the full three years of training.

Once your details are sent to your new employer, the School's involvement ceases.

In-service applicants

If you score over the minimum threshold at interview, you will have a place on the programme. You and your manager will be emailed with the next steps.

Further detailed guidance about the allocation process will be available on our website before the interviews take place.

Interview feedback

You can obtain your interview feedback free of charge by emailing hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk and attaching photographic ID. Feedback consists of interview station outcomes and any additional comments. You will receive your feedback within approximately one month. However, we cannot start to process requests until all outcomes have been released.

Special circumstances

We have a policy for applicants with special circumstances, who may qualify for priority allocation of training places. The special circumstances policy is explained in appendix one.

Fitness to practise

The fitness to practise questions in the application form cover things such as criminal convictions. If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, you are required to email further information to hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk. We must receive this no later than the closing date. Please mark your email as 'confidential'. If you are successful at the interviews, the information you have provided will be considered by a panel. They will decide whether the information you have provided makes you unsuitable for the programme.

Employment status and grade

Direct entry trainees will be employed on a three-year, full time, fixed term training contract, at NHS Agenda for Change Band 6. Web search 'NHS Agenda for Change Pay Bands' for the up to date pay rates.

Feedback on the recruitment process

You will be invited to participate in a national feedback survey. Feedback received from previous surveys has resulted in process improvements, so please help us by completing the survey.

Contacts and useful information

For general queries regarding the recruitment process, look at the 'frequently asked questions' and the 'knowledgebase' on our website. If you do not find the answer to your query, please email hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk

For the Scientist Training Programme curricula visit <https://curriculum.nshcs.org.uk/>

For background information on the Scientist Training Programme, including career and specialism information, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/stp

Appendix 1

How the special circumstances policy works

You can be considered under the special circumstances policy if you need to be in a certain geographical area because either

1. you are the primary carer for someone who is disabled, as defined by the Equality Act 2010
2. you have a medical condition or disability, and follow up for the condition in the specified location is an absolute requirement

Applying for special circumstances

To apply under this policy, you must tick the relevant box in your application form that indicates you have special circumstances.

Once you have ticked this box, the next step is to complete the special circumstances request form available on our website. Please email your form, together with supporting evidence, to hcsapplicants@hee.nhs.uk This must be done after your application has been submitted and before the application closing date.

Supporting evidence

If you are a primary carer as stated in point one above, please provide

- a written statement from a general practitioner or social services professional, who you have known for at least six months, confirming your role as primary carer
- the care plan
- proof of your current address. For example, a driving license or utility bill dated within the last three months

If you have a medical condition or disability as stated in point two above, please provide

- a report by the current medical specialist treating your condition or Occupational Health physician, in which they
 - describe the current medical condition or disability

- describe the nature of the ongoing treatment and frequency
- explain why the follow up must be delivered in a specific location, rather than by other treatment centres in the UK
- proof of your current address.

Your application will be reviewed by an eligibility panel and you will be notified of the decision by email. If you are dissatisfied with the decision, you will be notified of your right to appeal.

Allocation for applicants with special circumstances

If your application under the special circumstances policy is successful, we will try to ensure as far as possible, that you are offered a post in your specified region. We cannot guarantee that the offer will be with your first choice of employer, but we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

Our approach will be as follows

- you have to be within 20 miles of your home in Camford
- you have applied for a training post in cardiac science within that area
- a post in Camford hospital cardiac department is available. You have identified it as your first preference
- another applicant, Miss A, has identified the same post as one of her preferences

In these circumstances

- if you ranked higher than or equal to Miss A in the interview outcomes, you will be offered the Camford post
- if Miss A ranked higher than you but does not have special circumstances, we will offer Miss A the next preference on her list, and we will offer you the Camford post

However, there are some circumstances where we could not offer you the Camford post. For example, if Miss A in did not have a lower preference to fall back on.

Offers are allocated based on sub-preferences, which are your choice of your preferred combination of employers/locations. It is very important to select only employers/locations that you are willing to accept. So, in the fictional example given above, you should not select anything more than 20 miles from Camford.