## 

*Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield*

**4Ward North PhD Academy for Health Professionals**

**http://www.4wardnorth.org.uk**

## 4Ward North Clinical PhD Programme for Health Professionals

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### Guidance for Stage 1 Applications

Who are we? The Universities of Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield have come together since 2016 to set up the '4Ward North PhD Academy' to raise the quality of clinical academic research training in northern England. By bringing together our institutions, our metrics in research income and impactful publications and our track record for supporting academic health professionals, we stand alongside the very best in UK clinical and biomedical research. As testimony to this unified approach, we have gained enthusiastic collaboration from the Francis Crick Institute (FCI) and the Alan Turing Institute, and received funding from Wellcome to continue our prestigious PhD programme for five further years. In short, this is an excellent opportunity and setting to launch your career as a clinical academic of the future. Each individual PhD will be hosted by one of our four institutions.

What do we offer? Those who secure a place on the PhD programme will become '4Ward North PhD fellows', a prestigious marker of esteem for a future career combining research with clinical practice. The fellowship funds salary and pension contributions, project running costs and PhD registration fees. The funding is available for full time PhD registration over 3 years (pro-rated for part-time) and applications for part-time fellowships are encouraged. In addition, our successful awardees will receive: a comprehensive training programme with leading clinical academics and bespoke mentoring; a personalised training plan with one of the Programme Directors; and postdoctoral opportunities with the Francis Crick Institute to pump-prime the early postdoctoral research period.

What is the process? At Stage 1 you will complete a brief application form which comprises details of your CV and a brief vision statement. We welcome enquiries and applications from those who have had fewer research opportunities so far but who can evidence great potential for and commitment to a clinical academic career.

We will select around 20 individuals based on Stage 1 application to go forward to Stage 2. These individuals will be advised and guided on building a project with members of our supervisor pool and on putting together a full Stage 2 application. We will require supervision from across our centres and/or partners and we champion inter-disciplinary science. The Stage 2 application will be assessed and approximately 10 candidates will be shortlisted for interview. It is anticipated that up to five places on the 4Ward North clinical PhD programme will be awarded to start 1st August - 1st October 2026.

**Can I select my own supervisors?** You can build your supervisory team as you see necessary. However, successful awardees will all have a primary supervisor in one of our four universities plus collaboration and co-supervision from at least one other 4Ward North institution or partner. We will not accept applications where academic supervision is located solely in one university. If you require help identifying potential supervisors, please contact the programme directors who can help with this process.

What if you don’t get a 4Ward North fellowship? This is one of the advantages of our scheme. If you made it through Stage 1 but were not successful at Stage 2, we still want to help you build your project and guide you through the application process for an equivalent research training award from other funders, such as the MRC or NIHR. Remember, working with us brings you into contact with excellent supervisors at the leading edge of their specialties and disciplines. Our approach will provide a fantastic springboard for other doctoral fellowships where we can overcome one of the most common failings at national panels; namely, that candidates are excellent but their projects are weak and do not draw upon sufficient leading expertise, experience and training opportunities. We want applicants to work with the best, not necessarily the closest.

Who should apply? The Academy will support doctoral fellowships for health professionals from all disciplines who balance clinical work with an aspiration for developing a research career. This includes nurses, midwives and all categories of allied health professionals, including pharmacists and healthcare scientists, and those in veterinary medicine, dentistry and all sub-specialties within medicine and surgery. You will typically be at relatively early stages of your specialised clinical career or in training so that research can be built into a future plan to become a clinical academic. While ultimately we will select the best, we realise that the best come in many different shapes and forms; we are particularly keen to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed independent of personal circumstances and background.

###### What do we require now for your Stage 1 application?

* Applicants should submit a completed Stage 1 application form
* Please also complete our EDI monitoring survey using the link here: <https://www.qualtrics.manchester.ac.uk/jfe/form/SV_1zzRH3cUTks1I3A>
* The deadline for Stage 1 applications is **Monday 29th September 2025 (9am)**
* If you are shortlisted at Stage 1 to continue through to Stage 2, you are strongly advised to attend one of our online application advice events held on the week commencing **3rd November 2025**
* Discuss with your current employer your plans to undertake a PhD fellowship

What will happen next? Your Stage 1 application will be reviewed by experts familiar with the selection of clinical PhD fellows, with the outcome confirmed in the week commencing **27th October 2025**. Feedback may be given on unsuccessful Stage 1 applications but is not guaranteed. If selected for Stage 2 you will be invited to attend one of our online application advice events held on the week commencing **3rd November 2025.**

Contact for submission of Stage 1 applications and enquiries:

[N4@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:N4manchester@manchester.ac.uk)