

Modernising Scientific Careers

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1. General

Q. Which Universities will be offering the accredited Master Programme?

A. The Higher Education Institution offering the Master's degree will be decided following a competitive tendering exercise, which is expected to be complete in June 2011. Until that time, we cannot confirm which organisation will be offering the academic component of the training.

Q. How much academic input will there be in the training?

A. The Scientist Training Programme will be approximately two-thirds workplace-based training and one-third academic Masters Degree.

Q. Will trainees graduating from the STP training programme have a recognised international qualification?

A. A Masters degree from a Higher Education Institute is a recognised academic qualification under the European Qualifications Framework.

2. Terms and Conditions

Q. Will the trainee receive a salary?

A. Successful candidates will be appointed to a three year, fixed term contract attracting a salary of approximately £25,472 per annum.

Q. What Agenda for Change pay band will the trainees be working at?

A. All Trainee Healthcare Scientists will be employed at a provisional Band 6. In line with Agenda for Change, the banding will be reviewed after a period of employment/training. Employers should use the model job description found in Appendix A of the STP Recruitment Guide.

At the end of the 3-year training period, first post salary will vary according to the position obtained. Trainees will be able to apply for any suitable position across the Health Service and the pay band will be determined locally by the employing authority.

Q. Will the trainees need to contribute to their academic tuition fees?

A. Tuition fees for the part-time Master's degree, which trainees will follow in parallel with their workplace-based training programme, will be fully funded by the NHS. However, payment of travel and subsistence costs, including attendance at courses, are at the discretion of the individual employer.

Q. Will the trainees be eligible for a redundancy payment at the end of the 3-year contract?

A. Creating a 3 year Fixed-term Contract might entitle the employee to a redundancy payment at its conclusion. It is therefore advised to ensure that the duration of the trainees' contract is finite and the terms are clear. Further information on suggested wording can be found in Appendix A of the STP Recruitment Guide.

3. Application and Eligibility

Q. Are non-EU applicants eligible to apply for the training posts?

A. Applications from job seekers who require Tier 2 sponsorship to work in the UK will be considered alongside all other applications. However, non-EEA candidates may not be appointed to a post if a suitably qualified, experienced and skilled EU/EEA candidate is available to take up the post as the employing body is unlikely, in these circumstances, to satisfy the Resident Labour Market Test. The UK Border Agency requires employers to complete this test to show that no suitably qualified EEA or EU worker can fill the post. For further information please visit UK Border Agency website. *(DN Standard approved text from NHS Employers)*

Q. How many training posts can the candidates apply for?

A. Candidates have been told that they cannot apply for more than 4 posts.

Q. Does the 4 post restriction go across the UK?

A. The Scottish and Welsh schemes are entirely separate from the one in England and can be applied to in addition to the 4 posts maximum for the English scheme.

STP posts are only available in England in 2011. Scotland and Wales are continuing to advertise for clinical scientist posts in 2011.

Q. Are candidates who will be graduating in this academic year eligible to apply for the training posts?

A. Candidates are required to have obtained their degree by the time the training programme commences in September 2011. Therefore any candidate who is currently studying and whose predicted grades indicate that they are likely to achieve a 2:1 or higher BSc degree or equivalent are eligible to apply.

Q. What is a relevant degree?

A. Successful candidates might have a variety of relevant qualifications and experience. As a minimum, candidates should have an upper second or better BSc Honours Degree in a pure or applied science. The most commonly accepted degrees will be in life sciences (for example biology, microbiology, genetics or biochemistry), general physics and engineering, physiology, biology or human biology. Science degrees related to medicine and those such as biomedical science, medical physics, medical electronics or biotechnology would also be considered relevant, as would be those in

medical physiology, sports physiology or clinical physiology.
A second degree and/or research experience related to healthcare science specialisms, or equivalent evidence of scientific knowledge and academic capability would also be desirable.

Q. Are we looking to recruit new or more experienced graduates?

A. The NHS Departments carrying out the short-listing process will be judging which candidates most closely match the person specification. This focuses on whether an applicant has the required skills, knowledge and experience that could have been gained in a number of different settings. Successful candidates might have a variety of relevant qualifications and experience.

Q. What do we say to candidates who are enquiring why some of the posts originally listed on the NHS Careers website are not being advertised on NHS Jobs

A. The list of training posts detailed on the NHS Careers website were provisional. Since this list was published, a number of these posts may have been withdrawn or additional posts added. All the available posts are now advertised on the NHS Jobs website.

Q. Will candidates who have already obtained an accredited MSc (e.g. MSc in Audiology) that satisfies our current training systems be exempt from the MSc component of the STP training programme?

A. Candidates wishing to apply for the STP Training Programmes in 2011 should be prepared to undertake the full academic and workplace-based components of the scheme. However, where a candidate wishes their existing qualifications to be considered as credit against parts of the academic STP Masters degree, this process of accreditation of prior learning (APL) is achieved on a case by case basis within universities. General information about this process is available from any university website.

Q. Could candidates who have significant relevant work experience be exempt from elements of the Workplace Based Learning?

A. Candidates wishing to apply for the STP Training Programmes in 2011 should be prepared to undertake the full academic and workplace-based components of the scheme.

The MSC team will be developing the criteria and process for equivalence during 2011. This will involve dividing the work-place based curricula into blocks of learning against which equivalent learning and experience will be considered and therefore potentially providing exemption from elements of the workplace learning contained within STP programmes.

Q. If a candidate has applied for a training post which is advertised within a particular specialism, will they be offered the opportunity to change specialism before commencing their 2nd year of training?

A. Towards the end of the period of rotations and the elective, the trainee healthcare scientist can discuss with their training officer which specialist route from within their themed programme they wish to follow. This will depend on the aptitude and skills of the trainee and upon the needs of the NHS for different specialist skills. Where a trainee has selected their specialism before commencing the programme, subject to workforce demand and with agreement of their local employer, they may still be offered the opportunity to change.

4. The Selection Process

Q. Can the advert be closed before the 13th March?

A. Due to the high volume of applications expected, subject to Local Trust Recruitment Procedures, vacancies may need to be closed after an agreed number of applications have been received.

Q. How will the short-listing process be carried out?

A. Trusts have from the 14th-18th March 2011 to short-list from their pool of applicants. Further guidance on short-listing is available to ensure that it is undertaken consistently across the country. Details of short-listed candidates in rank order, their completed application forms and the completed short-listing form should be sent to the MSC Recruitment Manager in NHS West Midlands at the following email address: MSCrecruitment@westmidlands.nhs.uk. At this point, a central list of short-listed candidates and their details will be prepared and checked for consistency.

Q. Who will inform the candidates that they have been short-listed?

A. NHS West Midlands will inform the candidates whether they have been short-listed and which assessment centre they should attend and on what date. Candidates will not be reimbursed for their travel costs.

Q. How many candidates will be short-listed for each post?

A. A maximum of 4 candidates will be short-listed for each training post. However, trusts will identify a number of reserve candidates (5-10) in case the selected candidates have also been short-listed by other departments or they cannot attend the assessment centres.

Q. Where and when will the Assessment Centres be held?

A. Recruitment will be undertaken through a series of national assessment centres which will be organised by NHS West Midlands, who are experienced in recruiting MSC Healthcare Science trainees in genetics through this method. These assessment centres will be held in Birmingham in the West Midlands. The dates for each centre have been finalised and are between the 4th to 20th April. NHS West Midlands has

written to each recruiting trust with the timetable and further information. Accommodation will be funded and available to panel members where assessments are held over more than one day, are scheduled to start before 10am or finish after 5.30pm. Travel costs for panel members will be reimbursed up to a maximum of £100 per person.

Q. If an applicant has applied to several places are they expected to return several times for different interviews?

A. Applications may be received from the same candidate for posts in widely different geographical locations. Where possible, West Midlands SHA will try to avoid candidates having to attend more than one Assessment Centre.

Q. If a candidate is not able to attend the Assessment Centre on the date they have been allocated will they be offered an alternative date?

A. Due to the large numbers of candidates who will be required to pass through the Assessment Centre, we are not able to offer any flexibility on the dates candidates are invited to attend. Candidates are therefore advised to ensure they are available between the 4th -20th April. The dates of the assessment centres for each theme and specialism are available on the NHS Careers website.

Q. Will recruiters be able to interview the candidates that have applied to the specific post within their department?

A. Due to the large volume of candidates that will be required to attend the Assessment Centre; we will not be able to guarantee that candidates will necessarily be interviewed by representatives from the department they have applied to. However, every effort will be made to ensure this happens. Representatives from all recruiting trusts will have the opportunity to be involved in the assessment process.

Q. Will internal grow your own candidates have to go through an assessment centre?

A. Yes, although they will not need to apply through NHS Jobs, all internal NHS candidates will need to attend an assessment centre to secure a place on the STP programme.