
GW4-Clinical Academic Training (CAT) Programme Information for Supervisors

We have produced this guidance in the form of FAQs for Lead Supervisors and co-supervisors to clarify the Wellcome Trust funded GW4-CAT Programme and requirements for GW4-CAT Research Training Fellows. The universities of Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter are the 3 institutions currently involved and fellows on the Programme are medics, dentists and vets only.

What/who does the GW4-CAT ‘supervisory team’ consist of? Each supervisory team has one Lead Supervisor (formerly called Primary Supervisor) who is identified by the fellow after discussion and prior to preparing a PhD Project outline from the approved list of primary supervisors, i.e. senior academics who submitted their CV as part of the original Wellcome Trust (WT) funding application. Choice of lead supervisor determines the fellow’s ‘home’ university for purpose of PhD registration and governance. Co-supervisors should be selected to reflect the interdisciplinary and interinstitutional nature of the GW4-CAT Programme. Ideally at least 2 of the 3 institutions should be involved.

How is the fellow appointed? Medics, dentists and vets with research experience and a competitive CV apply to the funding call. After a shortlisting exercise (in line with WT and MRC processes), applicants are interviewed by a panel of GW4-CAT Board Members representing the universities of Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter and an external member. Applicants are not expected to have a fully formed PhD idea at interview as they will be encouraged to ‘think outside the box’ and to push themselves out of their comfort zone. The programme directors encourage fellows to take the opportunity of this PhD training fellowship to develop a ‘toolbox’ of skills.

How many fellows are appointed each year? Up to 5 places are available each year. We appoint on excellence and potential for a future clinical academic career, rather than clinical discipline or choice of home institution.

What is the process of preparing a PhD Project outline? Appointed fellows participate in the introductory week and will have several months to prepare a PhD project outline. For most people this time will be funded by other sources and the project may have to be prepared during annual leave, weekends or at other protected research times such as an academic clinical fellowship. The lead supervisor, co-supervisors and any collaborators will be identified during this time and the fellow will work closely with the primary and secondary supervisors, a GW4-CAT Director and Programme Manager, to prepare a PhD project outline. This includes the preparation of a project budget. Two forms need to be completed – one for the Wellcome Trust and one for GW4-CAT. The fellow is interviewed on the project outline by the GW4-CAT directors prior to registration and start date.

What does the WT funding cover? Funding covers a 3 year (or fte) clinical salary in line with the fellows’ current pay and conditions (to be agreed prior to starting); a consumables budget which is appropriate to the project (expected to be between £15-45k in total), animal costs (if required), PhD home fees and a one-off contribution of £5k towards travel and training. It will not generally cover equipment costs. Once agreed by GW4-CAT, management of the budget will fall to the fellow as grant management is part of training.

Is there a difference between a GW4-CAT fellow and a bioscience postgraduate? Many of the generic training courses for PhDs will be relevant to GW4-CAT fellows. However, in most cases the medics, dentists and vets appointed will have spent a few years in clinical training and may well have attended training modules in management and leadership skills and tend to have more life experience than a typical postgraduate undertaking a PhD. There are also time constraints, particularly for medics and dentists, who will be expected to return to complete their clinical training to receive their Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) so that they can progress their clinical academic career.

Can a Lead Supervisor supervise more than one GW4-CAT fellow? At present Lead Supervisors can only supervise one GW4-CAT fellow at one time. However, the Management Board will consider this pragmatically on a case-by-case basis if requests are received. Consideration is likely to be dependent on supervisor capacity to provide enough time for high quality training and supervision. Nevertheless, it is acceptable for a lead supervisor to be a co-supervisor if skills and expertise are appropriate to the PhD project.

Do GW4-CAT have progress monitoring requirements in addition to the home institution/faculty/school? Yes, although we do not want to duplicate what already happens, we do need to be able to track progress and capture all training and output from the fellow and we will be asking whether you are willing to share information and reports (with permission). In addition, each fellow will have an annual review with the GW4-CAT directors. Lead and co-supervisors will be invited to attend this review.

Why do fellows have to identify a separate mentor? A clinical mentor is identified by the fellow and this could be someone that has an existing relationship and advises on career progression or issues with work/life balance. The mentor should be independent from the science and PhD project, and may be someone from the same clinical speciality as the fellow.

What reporting does the Wellcome Trust require? The WT have asked us to report information on cohort achievements (e.g. awards, prizes), further details on new lead and co supervisors, and metrics related to number of applications and appointments to the Programme.

What role does the GW4-CAT office hub play? The Programme Manager and Administrator are the first point of contact for any queries relating to all aspects of the programme. They can advise fellows and supervisors as well as deal with the administrative challenges associated with a doctoral training partnership across 3 institutions and work closely with colleagues in finance, HR and postgraduate administration.

How do I become a Lead Supervisor if I am not already listed? We ask for an expression of interest and a copy of your CV. Please visit our website for the criteria a potential Lead Supervisor would be expected to meet. For each new supervisor, the WT have asked us to provide information on the number of students supervised to successful completion, the number of current clinical PhD fellows and the total number of current PhD students/fellows. It is expected that all lead supervisors have a good track record of students supervised to successful completion.

Is the GW4-CAT Programme related to any of the other GW4 DTPs? No, not directly as this programme is for medics, dentists and vets. However, we realise that supervisors have students from other GW4 programmes and all PGRs can access training across the GW4 institutions. Other funded DTPs may have clinicians registered and in which case, we would reach out and invite them to share some of our GW4-CAT activities and training. Please let us know if you have a clinician who would be interested in being invited.

For any further information, please email GW4-CAT@bristol.ac.uk, or visit our website <http://gw4-cat.ac.uk/>