



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

## FORUM OF IRISH POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL TRAINING BODIES

### Call for Applications

#### National SpR/SR Academic Fellowship Programme 2009

#### Background

The Report of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training (MET) Group (2006), chaired by Dr Jane Buttimer and entitled '*Preparing Ireland's doctors to meet the health needs of the 21st century*', identified a strong research environment as central to ensuring the quality of medical education and training and to improving the quality of care provided to patients. It highlighted that such an environment is vital to attracting and retaining high caliber people to this country and to our health services, to enhancing their research skills and to generating greater clinical insights and evidence for better healthcare. The *Buttimer Report* made a number of recommendations targeted at developing research capacity in the health services, including a recommendation that a number of fellowships be awarded on a competitive basis each year to medical graduates who wish to make a career in research and to undertake a PhD.

In order to implement this recommendation of the *Buttimer Report* the Health Service Executive (HSE) METR Unit, together with the Health Research Board (HRB), the university academic medical departments and the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies, have established an innovative fellowship programme entitled the 'National SpR/SR Academic Fellowship Programme (NSAFP)' which will provide a coherent and integrated training and career path for clinical academics. This new fellowship programme will ensure that those individuals that wish to pursue a career as a clinical academic can do so without having to postpone their specialist clinical training to conduct a PhD or step out of their existing training programme. The newly established National SpR/SR Academic Fellowship Programme (NSAFP) will be funded jointly by the HSE and the HRB and invitations are now invited for applicants for up to four fellowships commencing in July 2009.

#### Scope

The NSAFP is an integrated clinical and research training programme where, following successful completion of the programme, the trainee will be awarded with a Certificate of Satisfactory

Completion of Training and a PhD. The scheme is targeted at those medical trainees at the early stages of SpR/SR training (no more than two years completed at the time of NSAFP application) or who successfully gain entry onto a SpR/SR programme at the immediate subsequent uptake. It is envisaged that up to four fellowships will be awarded in this round and fellowships will be made to the strongest applicants on the basis of a national competition. Applicants from the Training Bodies listed in Appendix I are welcome to apply and fellowships will be awarded on the basis of excellence rather than ring-fenced for any specialty or group of specialties.

The fellowships will be jointly funded by HSE and the HRB - the HSE will fund the clinical salary component and the HRB will fund the research component, including running costs, registration fees, a travel grant and a training and development allowance. The salary for the duration of the integrated fellowship will be based on the trainee's appropriate point on the SpR salary scale. Fellows will still be entitled to apply to the HSE for their training grant for appropriate training expenses.

The four successful applicants will be asked to submit an *ad persona* training plan to the HSE/HRB and this will provide details such as the total proposed duration of the training programme, the breakdown and timing of both the research and clinical components (flexible options based on either blocks and/or segments may be proposed although the total research component should total at least 36 months). This *ad persona* training programme will be generated by the fellow with the input and agreement of the relevant Training Body and the nominated clinical and research supervisors. Once approved by the HRB/HSE, this will form the basis of the Training Agreement offered to the fellow. While this approach has the advantage of allowing each individual to select a pathway that suits them, it is envisaged that the fellow will ideally begin their clinical training first while undertaking some generic research skills training and concluding their research literature review. At a time pre-appointed in the *ad persona* training plan, the fellow will submit a detailed research protocol to the HRB and this will be subjected to international peer review. The HRB will only release the research running costs where research projects are found to be of high quality by peer reviewers.

In exceptional circumstances, where a fellow for justifiable reasons needs to exit the PhD programme, s/he will be permitted to revert to the standard SpR programme after consultation with the Training Body and as long as progress within the clinical training of the programme has been satisfactory.

### **Eligibility**

Only candidates who are successful in securing a place on a higher specialist training programme can be considered for the NSAFP. Candidates must be either be enrolled in the early stages of SpR/SR training (no more than two years completed at the time of NSAFP application) or have applied for entry onto an approved SpR/SR training programme at the immediate subsequent uptake. Individual applicants interested in the programme should contact their respective Training Bodies as the first step of the application process involves sending in an application to the Training Body. While previous research experience is considered important in the assessment process for NSAFP posts, outstanding candidates with little/no research experience may still apply.

## Application Process

The NSAFP application process and deadlines have been set to align with the closing date of the standard SpR/SR applications to individual Training Bodies. In this way, applicants that are not recommended for fellowships will still be part of the standard SpR/SR application/interview process.

The NSAFP application form will consist of the standard application form for SpR/SR posts, a supplementary form addressing questions relating to the academic/research component and a current *Curriculum Vitae*. Applicants who are currently already in an SpR/SR training programme are not necessarily required to complete a new SpR/SR application form but they will be required to provide a copy of their original application form (should be obtainable from their Training Body), the supplementary form and a CV. Where a copy of the original application form is not available, a new SpR/SR form must be completed to fulfil the application criteria for the NSAFP.

Application is made by the prospective fellow in the first instance to the relevant Training Body. Candidates already enrolled in an SpR/SR training programme must submit to the relevant Training Body by 5 January 2009:

- Original SpR/SR application form (should be obtainable from their Training Body)
- The NSAFP Supplementary form addressing questions relating to the academic/research component
- Letter of Support from academic supervisor
- Curriculum Vitae

For candidates who applied for an SpR/SR programme for the immediate subsequent intake the application submitted by the candidate to the relevant Training Body for entry onto the relevant SpR/SR programme will form part of the complete NSAFP application. At the time of application for the SpR/SR programme candidates should indicate to their relevant Training Body their intention to apply to NSAFP and they must submit the following to the relevant Training Body by 5 January 2009:

- The NSAFP Supplementary form addressing questions relating to the academic/research component
- Letter of Support from academic supervisor
- Curriculum Vitae

Please note Training Bodies will have set individual closing dates for the SpR/SR scheme.

Each Training Body will then, in consultation with appropriate representation of clinician academics, review each NSAFP application submitted to them. They can then forward up to a maximum of four recommended applications to the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies for further assessment. The Training Body will be responsible at this juncture for alerting applicants as to whether they have been recommended to the Forum or not.

The Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies will coordinate the collation of all applications submitted by the Training Bodies and these will be forwarded for assessment to an independent panel of experts. This panel will consist of representatives of the Forum, HSE-appointed specialists and internationally-recognised clinician academics as nominated by the HRB. Using a pre-defined and transparent scoring criteria, panel members will agree on the 8-10 outstanding candidates that they would like to interview. NSAFP applicants that are applying for entry onto a SpR/SR programme at the next uptake will compete as usual at the interviews for SpR/SR posts in early 2009 and must be successful in this competition to remain in the NSAFP competition. Candidates who are unsuccessful in these interviews will be informed that they are ineligible for further NSAFP assessment. Furthermore, those applicants that have not been short-listed by the expert panel for interview will be informed at this juncture by the Forum.

The expert panel will convene during February 2009 to interview the 8-10 short-listed candidates. Successful NSAFP candidates will be informed in March 2009. The appointment will not be confirmed until candidates are successful at SpR/SR interview.

The fellows will then develop their *ad persona* training plan in collaboration with their Training Body and their clinical and academic supervisors. This plan will be submitted to the HSE/HRB for approval and the agreed plan will form the basis of a Training Agreement between all parties. The successful fellows will begin their training programme in July 2009.

*Please note that details, including your SpR/SR application form, Supplementary NSAFP application form and CV as submitted will be circulated to relevant officials of the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies, HSE, HRB and to members of the NSAFP expert assessment panel.*

### **Closing date for applications**

Candidates must apply to their own Training Body by 5 January 2009.

*Please note that application for entry onto the SpR/SR training programme is a separate process and outside the NSAFP process. Candidates must apply directly to the relevant Training Body for entry onto the SpR/SR scheme. Training Bodies will have set individual closing dates and it is the responsibility of the candidate to advise themselves of the appropriate closing date. Applications submitted directly from the candidate to the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Training Bodies will not be accepted.*

### **Who to contact for further information**

Leah O' Toole  
Programme Manager  
National SpR/SR Academic Fellowship Programme  
Forum of Irish Postgraduate Training Bodies  
c/o The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland  
Frederick House, 19 South Frederick Street, Dublin 2  
**Tel 353-1-8639726**  
**Email LeahOToole@RCPI.IE**

## **Appendix I**

### ***Applications are invited from the following Training Bodies:***

College of Anaesthetists  
Advisory Committee in Emergency Medicine, RCSI & RCPI  
Faculty of Occupational Medicine, RCPI  
Faculty of Paediatrics, RCPI  
Faculty of Pathology, RCPI  
Faculty of Public Health Medicine, RCPI  
Faculty of Radiologists, RCSI  
Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine, CRSI & RCPI  
Institute of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, RCPI  
Irish College of General Practitioners  
Irish College of Ophthalmologists  
Irish Committee of Higher Medical Training, RCPI  
Irish Committee of Higher Surgical Training, RCSI  
Irish Psychiatric Training Committee  
Royal College of Physicians of Ireland  
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland