

How to apply for the AFP

What is the AFP?

The AFP (Academic Foundation Programme) is a version of the 'standard' Foundation Programme that all new graduates embark on for their first two years of work. It differs in that one of the rotations is allocated to research, teaching or leadership and management i.e. an academic area.

There are currently around 450 places on the AFP in the UK. While the broad idea of the AFP is the same in every deanery, there are significant variations in structure so it is important to fully research each one to see what suits you best. The academic placement is typically coordinated by the local university and may follow several structures, including a 4 month block in the second year of the AFP, or day release throughout the second year. Many programmes also include teaching throughout the second year while some offer teaching in the first year as well.

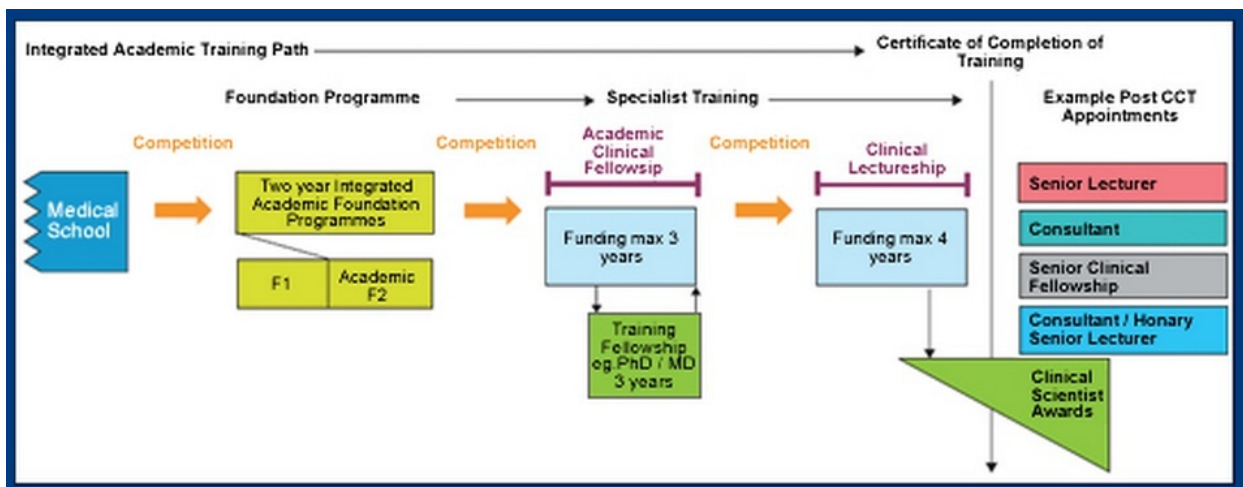
The AFP website has plenty of information on the structure of the programmes and details on applications, as well as a link to the "Rough Guide to the AFP" which is full of useful help and advice.

<http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/pages/academic-programmes>

What is a clinical academic?

Clinical academics are usually university employees who spend around half their week as practicing doctors and carrying out research and/or educating medical and dental students in the other half. Although the AFP can act as a "launch pad" to help you to get on to the clinical academic ladder you do not have to have done the programme to apply for an Academic Clinical Fellow (ACF) post later on or to get involved in research at any later stage in your career.

The diagram below shows how the AFP can help lead to a career as a clinical academic, however there is still a lot competition at each subsequent stage on the road to becoming a clinical academic.



What should I do while at medical school to boost my chances?

In medical school, you can help boost your AFP application by:

- Undertaking research projects
- Attending conferences, journal clubs and/or seminars
- Presenting oral and/or poster presentations, or being included on publications if you are lucky enough to get a chance to do so
- Teaching
- Taking on leadership roles on committees, etc
- Thinking about the application in the broadest sense to demonstrate you are an all-rounder with skills acquired in and out of the medical environment

It is also worth thinking about why you want to pursue a career in academic medicine and exploring what specialties and areas may be of particular interest to you.

What is FPAS?

FPAS is the Foundation Programme Application System. It is the website whereby all applications to the AFP should be submitted. Applications to the AFP are done in addition to the standard foundation programme.

<https://fpas.konetic.net/2014/cac/home.aspx>

I have an interview! What can I expect?

Congratulations! You have got past the first hurdle!

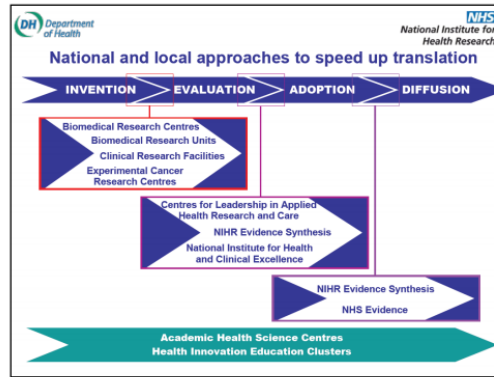
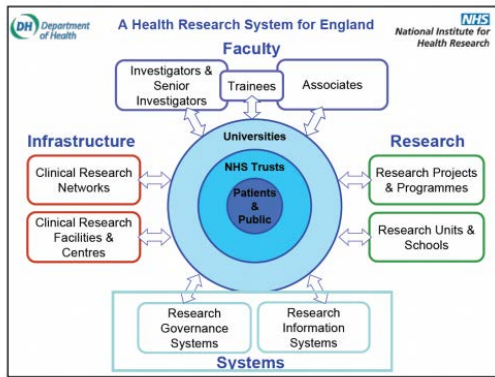
Firstly, it is important to know that invitations for interview are usually staggered and will be at different times in each deanery – if your friends have received interview dates then it does not mean that you won't! All places (up to 2 offers each) are announced nationally on the same day so the different interview dates do not affect your decision making.

Interview styles and techniques vary between foundation schools. If you are offered an interview, try to get in contact with somebody who has a place there already. They are the best person to give you tips on that particular interview (INSPIRE has contact with AFP doctors in various deaneries around the country so please get in touch with us if you need help with this!!). In Southampton, interviews have a "pass/fail" clinical station – the score does not affect the interview ranking but you have to pass to be offered a post.

Practice is key! Know why you are applying, and why the AFP will help you in your career. Have a chat with potential supervisors in your field of interest to get research ideas.

Are there things I should know about the UK's research infrastructure?

Yes!! You should have an understanding of how research and research facilities interact with both universities and hospitals, and how "bench" research is brought to the patient. The NIHR website (<http://www.nihr.ac.uk/industry/about-nocri.htm>) has many useful links and diagrams for you to use to build your knowledge.



It is also useful to have a basic understanding of the research facilities in the deanery that you are interviewing at, as well as what areas that university hospital specialises in. Do your research!!

I wasn't offered a place on the AFP but am still interested in research. Is there another way of getting started?

Academic training is not just limited to formal training schemes – if that were the case then there would not be nearly enough medical researchers. Formal schemes give you the time to do the research, but it is still possible if you don't get a place on the AFP. It just means that you need to find the time to train in research while also training to be a doctor.

Finally, just because you have not completed the AFP, it doesn't mean that you cannot join the clinical academic pathway at another point. Do all you can to boost your academic CV and there is no reason why you can't be successful.