

Guidance for applicants

Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellowships

Co-funded by THIS Institute and Homerton
College

Applicants should read this guidance in full before preparing an application and refer to the relevant sections at the time of completing the application form.

1. About The Healthcare Improvement Studies (THIS) Institute

At THIS Institute we aim to create a world-leading scientific asset for the NHS by strengthening the evidence-base for improving the quality and safety of healthcare. Co-created by two exceptional organisations - the University of Cambridge and the Health Foundation – THIS Institute is founded on the guiding principle that efforts to improve care should be based on the highest quality evidence. We combine academic rigour with the real concerns of the people who use and work in the NHS. And we're highly collaborative, working closely with patients, healthcare staff, and other sectors, to provide a unique range of perspectives.

THIS Institute is made possible by the Health Foundation, an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and healthcare for people in the UK.

Made possible by

2. About Homerton College

Homerton College is the biggest College of the University of Cambridge by student numbers, and the newest. Although it has a long history as an independent institution – first as a training college for religious ministry and more recently as a renowned teacher-training institution – it became a full College of the University only recently, in 2010.

The College currently has about 57 academic staff (Fellows), 560 undergraduate students, and 350 graduate students. Students are admitted in a broad range of subjects.

Homerton College was founded in London in 1768 and moved to Cambridge in 1894; in 2018 the College will celebrate its 250th Anniversary. The College is located on a large and leafy campus in South Cambridge, close to Addenbrooke's Hospital and the railway station.

2. Background to Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellowship awards

Growing capacity and capability in healthcare improvement research is one of the THIS Institute's key goals. By supporting promising early-career researchers, this programme will help to build critical mass for future research and improvement leadership. THIS Institute and Homerton College plan to co-fund two Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellowships, which will be based at the University of Cambridge and will be tenable for four years (or pro-rata part-time) with effect from 1 September 2019. These Fellowships offer a career-boosting opportunity for exceptional early career researchers to lead high-quality studies that will advance the field, to join a supported community of improvement researchers, and to develop their research leadership skills.

We are looking for individuals who can demonstrate that they can deliver the highest standards of research excellence and are driven to apply their skills to studying improvement in healthcare quality and safety. There is no age limit, but a Fellowship is intended to support those at an early stage in their academic careers. The requirement will be to show how the proposed research will add to the healthcare improvement evidence-base and will be of relevance to the UK health system.

Fellowship awards will include a salary/stipend and successful applicants will become College Research Associates at Homerton College. All Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows will convene regularly in Cambridge as part of the Institute's "THIS Community" and will have access to a mentoring scheme. In addition, the Institute will facilitate leadership development through a cohort learning set, with expert facilitation for Fellows to develop skills in reflection,

communication, leadership strategies and change management, as well as a specially tailored strand of activity at an annual meeting at Homerton. All Fellows must commit to attend the leadership development learning set sessions.

Membership of the THIS Community

Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows will have a unique opportunity to be part of a vibrant and intellectually stimulating interdisciplinary and intergenerational community, centred on the study of improvement in healthcare. THIS Community will meet regularly at Homerton and will also function as a professional learning community, providing a 'home' for researchers from a wide range of disciplines. It is expected that Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows will be actively involved in these activities.

Mentoring

Fellows will benefit from mentorship tailored to their career stage. Mentors will be experienced in research and career development linked to the broad field of improvement studies. Individual mentors will be approved by the Institute and agree to the ethics and standards of the Institute scheme.

3. Overview of the application process

Candidates may be graduates of any university and will have completed or be about to complete a PhD. Candidates must have been awarded their PhD before commencing the Fellowship. There is no age limit for eligibility, but THIS Institute and Homerton College will not normally appoint Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows who are more than three years beyond the award of a doctorate (pro rata where circumstances such as parental leave or sickness leave apply). PhDs may be in any discipline that is relevant or potentially relevant to the study of how to improve healthcare, broadly defined.

Individuals wishing to apply for a Fellowship will need to identify a potential host department within Cambridge University for the Fellowship, but this may be done with the help of THIS Institute following award of a Fellowship.

The two Fellowships will be awarded in each of the areas below:

- Management. This would include sub-fields such as organisational development and change, operations, service design, digital innovation and knowledge translation.
- Any discipline with potential to contribute to the study of how to improve healthcare. Examples include health services research, epidemiology, and social science, as well as other fields within and beyond healthcare, including, for example, law, philosophy, engineering and many more.

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Applications are welcome from individuals working in any discipline or that can demonstrate a role in, and contribution to, research that is focused on improving healthcare for people in the UK. Those with a clinical background are eligible for these Fellowships and may be able to adjust Fellowship arrangements to facilitate completion of clinical training where appropriate.

A Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellowship is intended to be held full-time for four years. Part-time Fellowships, at a minimum of 0.6FTE, can be held over a maximum of ~6.5 years. These will be considered where, for example, applicants are undergoing clinical training or other circumstances apply. Those in clinical speciality training will be responsible for making their own arrangements with the relevant deanery or Local Education and Training Board, or equivalent, where appropriate.

All applications must be submitted via our [Fellowship Management System](#).

The closing date for applications is 8 January 2019, 14.00 GMT. We do not accept late applications.

4. Assessment criteria

THIS Institute and Homerton College will run a competitive assessment process to select Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows. Candidates will need to demonstrate how their PhD research and/or subsequent research is relevant to efforts to improve quality and safety in healthcare in the UK.

Applications should provide evidence of relevant experience relating to all the assessment criteria detailed below:

- Demonstration of a commitment to developing a career in improvement research
- Confirmation of award of PhD or about to complete a PhD (e.g. PhD has been submitted but not yet examined). The candidate must have been awarded their PhD by the time they take up their Fellowship.
- Not more than three years beyond the award of a doctorate (pro rata where relevant circumstances apply).
- Application of rigorous research methods and theory (appropriate to discipline) evidenced through outputs from doctoral research.
- Potential for forming collaborations, influencing and impact in activities to further the improvement of quality and safety of healthcare services, at team, local or national level.
- Vision, drive and ability to act as a leader and advocate for improvement studies in the future.

- A medium to long-term view of how it is hoped the Fellowship work will make a difference in the broad field of healthcare improvement research.

5. Proposed research study

Fellows will lead an original research project during their Fellowship. Research proposals should have potential to take the field of healthcare improvement studies forward.

THIS Institute particularly welcomes applications that seek to generate systematic knowledge about:

- What works and why in approaches and interventions aimed at improving quality and safety
- Challenges related to standardisation, harmonisation, replication and scaling
- Methods and theory in studying improvement

Research proposals should ideally address at least one of these scientific goals. As illustrative examples (only), this might be by developing evidence for improvement interventions and approaches, perhaps drawing on evidence from other fields such as business and management, engineering, or safety science; developing measures of quality and safety; conducting scholarly analysis of legal issues in improvement; or producing methodological advances.

Research proposals need to demonstrate how the work will add to the evidence-base for improving quality and safety in healthcare. Projects should show their relevance to the UK health system, and should ideally target areas that are either currently not supported or receive only limited support from existing funders. Projects that focus on neglected areas for improvement research are especially welcome, as are those that make use of existing data infrastructures (for example, routine data, national clinical audits etc.) and those that extend the range of disciplines (e.g. philosophy, engineering, law, economics, social science etc) that can be used to study how to improve the organisation and delivery of healthcare. Projects that create novel interdisciplinary links will be especially welcome.

We do not fund the following types of research projects:

- Global health
- Projects targeting behaviour change or self-management in patients
- Descriptive projects without an improvement strategy to be evaluated
- Projects describing variation in healthcare or the epidemiology of a specific disease without an improvement strategy to be evaluated

- Animal research
- Basic research in the biomedical sciences (including but not only wet lab work)
- Projects seeking to develop patient-reported outcome measures
- Creation of cohorts
- Development or testing of computer apps
- Projects that seek to do an improvement project (e.g. applying the Model for Improvement with PDSA cycles, Lean etc.) unless embedded within a research study
- Audits
- Population/public health except where relevant to quality and safety in healthcare organisation and delivery
- Projects that seek to develop devices, technology and/or pharmaceutical agents
- Projects without potential for generalisation or transferability beyond a single clinical group/condition

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact THIS Institute to confirm whether their proposed research is within scope before starting their application. Please contact fellowships@thisinstitute.cam.ac.uk.

Assessment will consider the extent to which the research proposal is:

- Relevant to improving quality and/or safety in UK healthcare
- Specified appropriately to be completed in a four-year Fellowship (or equivalent period pro rata)
- Demonstrates appropriate study design and research methods, taking into account different disciplinary norms
- Reflects an appropriately scoped review of the relevant, existing evidence and systematic reviews of that evidence
- Likely to make a valuable contribution to the field of improvement research
- Well-presented and clearly written, and includes a high-quality plain English summary

6. Funding

The stipend for Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows is £33,198 per annum, regardless of the clinical/non-clinical status of Fellows. Funds for a computer or laptop and two open-access publications will also be provided.

We offer membership of THIS Community and access to a mentoring scheme at no cost to Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellowships. Fellows will be expected

to participate in learning sets and other leadership development opportunities provided by THIS Institute.

Successful individuals will be issued with a formal funding agreement with Homerton College.

7. Assessment and selection

All applications will be checked initially for eligibility and completeness. A preliminary assessment and scoring against the selection criteria will then take place by a selection panel, at the end of which high-scoring applications will be sent for external peer review and we will seek references.

Applications shortlisted following peer review will be invited for a panel interview, to take place **12 March 2019**. After the interviews (which may include a short presentation and other tasks), the panel will select Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows based on how far they demonstrate fulfilment of the selection criteria and how they aim to maximise the opportunity of the Fellowship to contribute to the field of improvement research.

All shortlisted applicants who are interviewed will be informed of the outcome of their application following the selection panel meeting. All peer-reviewed applicants will receive brief written feedback.

8. Monitoring and reporting requirements

The Institute and Homerton College will require Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellows to submit an annual report to include:

- A research progress report, including a summary of research undertaken for the Fellowship and any slippage against the proposed project timescale.
- Information on the Fellow's relevant publications, presentations, other activities to promote improvement research and/or to influence quality and/or safety of care services.
- A reflection on personal development to include the contribution from and to learning sets, mentoring and THIS Community.

Following completion of the Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellowship, the Fellow is expected to have successfully completed a robust research programme and can show evidence of:

- Completion of the research proposed in the application.
- Increased research skills in existing and new areas.
- The ability to independently lead a research programme.

- Leadership skills relevant to an academic career.
- A range of publications (including as a minimum two open access) and other outputs arising from the Fellowship research within two years of completing the Fellowship.
- Contribution to improvement research capacity-building, through for example, generating new research grants, mentoring Masters and /or PhD students, teaching on improvement research.
- Increased leadership and management skills.
- The establishment of a broad range of collaborative relationships.

The institute's communications team will develop a set of core messages and acknowledgements for the Healthcare Improvement Studies Fellowship awards, and recipients are expected to use these when communicating externally about the Fellowship awards. Fellowship award recipients should adopt the agreed Institute and Homerton branding in all communication and media, for example presentations, publications, academic articles, websites or videos, both internally and externally.

9. Application, selection and recruitment timetable

Competition opens – 15 November 2018, 09.00 GMT

Application deadline – 8 January 2019, 14:00 GMT

First stage assessment completed – 17 January 2019

Short-listed candidates notified of interview – 5 March 2019

Interviews – 12 March 2019

Funding decision – 20 March 2019