For APRC
17th June 2013

APRC.13.06.**12**

Request for exemption from Regulation 6: Duration of Programmes

Topic and purpose of the paper

1. To request a permanent exemption from the Regulations on Duration of Programmes Section 6.2.2. and 6.2.3 for the ACF framework programme (8060) in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences.

Consultation

2. This extension has been requested following consultation within MDS and Registry.

Proposal(s) / recommendation(s)

3. That the ACF framework be granted exemption from the following sections of the Regulations:

6.2.2

Award	*Minimum period*	*Maximum period*
Postgraduate Certificate	*4 months*	*2 years*

6.2.3 (a) The minimum and maximum periods of study permitted for programmes prescribed for research degrees of the University shall be:

Award	*Minimum period*	*Maximum period*
One-year MRes	*1 year (full-time)*	*2 years (full-time)*

6.2.3 (c) In the case of Registered Students studying on a part-time basis these periods should be extended on a pro-rata basis.

That instead, all students undertaking the ACF framework will have four years for the duration of their PGCert and MRes. Trainees receive 25% of their time for three years for this programme. This is dedicated time and in addition to time students may wish to spend “out of hours” on their studies.

Background

4. UoB in collaboration with the West Midlands Deanery currently receive at least 10 Academic Clinical Fellow (ACF) trainees annually. These posts are funded directly from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The trainees are medically or dentally qualified trainees in the early years of their postgraduate training (post Foundation training) ST1-ST3. Details of these posts can be found here: http://www.nihrtcc.nhs.uk/intetacatrain/acfs.

5. The ACFs hold three year posts and are employed by our local NHS trusts, but are released 25% of their time over their three years to become involved in academic

work at the University. The aim of the post is to allow the trainee to “be able to develop their academic skills and be supported in preparing an application for a Research Training Fellowship (to undertake a higher research degree) or an application for a place on an educational programme (leading to a higher degree). Success in these applications is defined as the end point of an ACF.”
For the majority of trainees the main aim of the post is to secure funding to allow them to complete a PhD (which they take up after the ACF post). In most cases they aren’t looking to complete any formal qualification within their ACF post. However it is recognised that some trainees may not be successful in gaining a fellowship to allow them to complete a PhD, or they may have reconsidered their career pathway; for these trainees the possibility of obtaining a formal qualification for the work that they carried out within their three year post is very attractive.

6. In 2008 NIHR required that the University “must offer, or be able to access through collaboration with another HEI, appropriate modules and an appropriate Masters Level Qualification” (Appendix 1). It was this requirement that lead to the initiation of the ACF framework.

7. In 2009 we responded to the NIHR outlining our programme (Appendix 2).

8. The NIHR requires the University to make the credit bearing modules available to their trainees, but there is no obligation on the trainees to take up the opportunity. In practice this means that many of our trainees take only either one or two of the core modules. It is therefore important for our completion rates that we don’t enrol students on to a formal qualification in the first instance. Currently all our students are enrolled on to 8060 PGVRS Academic Clinical Fellowship which has 2 exit qualifications:

   8061: MRes Clinical Research
   8064: PGCert Clinical Research

<u>Arguments to Support Proposal</u>

9. All students will be informed at the start of their programme the timeframe they will need to work towards. When the students enrol on any of the modules they will obviously need to complete the module assessment within the appropriate time limit. Trainees are all enrolled when they take up their ACF post and are encouraged to take the core taught elements of the programme in their first year. Leaving the remaining two years to complete the final 20 credit module and the research element of the progarmme.

10. As the ACF posts are three years in duration,it is important that students are able to have opportunity during the whole of this time to complete a qualification. It may not be until their third year that it becomes evident that they are not going to progress further down the academic route and enrol on a higher degree. At this point it may be important for the students to finish their post with a recognised qualification. We are therefore advocating extending the maximum duration of the PGCert to four years.

11. Conversely we aren’t keen to allow students to remain enrolled on our programme a long time after they have left their ACF post. Experience shows that students’ engagement with their programme diminishes once they move on to new posts. There is also a danger that their research will become outdated if students work within a timeframe dictated by a pro-rata arrangement (students working 25% of time

would have four years to do the research and a further four years to write up a total of eight years). We propose that a minimum of three years with a maximum of four years be given to these students to allow them to complete the MRes.

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College of Medical and Dental Sciences
May 2013

Appendix 1

From the Office of the

Director General of Research and Development
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17 November 2008

Dear Professor Booth

Taught Modular Programme for NIHR Academic Clinical Fellows

We are further strengthening clinical academic training from NIHR to ensure that clinicians are well prepared for careers in clinical academic medicine and dentistry.

The recently published Implementation Plan for developments to the NIHR ACF training experience (www.nihr.ac.uk/about_implementation_plans.aspx) requires that each host medical and dental school must by September 2009 have in place a formal taught research training programme available to ACFs that covers at least the following areas:

- Study design and statistics
- Bioinformatics
- Epidemiology
- Ethical aspects of clinical research
- Project design, planning, costing and management
- Research governance & the regulatory framework for research
- GCP
- Patient and public involvement in research
- Refereeing of papers and grant applications
- Diversity/equal opportunities in research/cultural competence
- Time management and personal effectiveness
- Leadership: Practitioner, Partner and Leader roles

In addition, access to relevant modules in fields including sociology, ergonomics, engineering etc. to develop multi- and inter-disciplinary thinking is to be encouraged.

Where the focus of the ACF's research is education research, or where otherwise appropriate, the ACF should have opportunities to learn about research into learning/teaching skills as part of the taught programme.

Each development programme for an ACF (which may include research elements as well as the taught elements) must be credit bearing and capable of leading to a Masters level qualification (eg MRes or MEd) or of gaining exemption from corresponding elements of a

Masters level qualification, especially where such a qualification is a precondition to pursuing research leading to the award of a PhD.

Regional collaboration across medical schools is encouraged where a joint programme will enrich the experience of the trainees or lead to joint investment in technology based learning.

It is expected that taught modules made available to ACFs will also be made available to other mainstream NIHR research clinical trainees (including nurses, midwives, allied health professionals, and healthcare scientists) belonging to your School/NHS partnership who wish to explore these subject areas.

Each host medical school must offer, or be able to access through collaboration with another HEI, appropriate modules and an appropriate Masters Level Qualification. It is expected that the taught programme will be in place by September 2009 and that accreditation arrangements will be in place by September 2010.

To support medical schools in this development, NIHR will invest a sum equivalent to £4500 per allocated place over the three year period 2009 to 2011. Thus, if a medical school has 24 ACF posts (say 8 recruited each year for a three year period) there will be an investment of £108000. This sum will be available to the medical school once it provides evidence that an appropriate taught programme has been developed and is ready for delivery after September 2009, and that arrangements have been put in place to ensure by September 2010 the programme will be credit bearing. We will produce brief guidance setting out the format that this evidence should take.

There will be no further fee payments in respect of NIHR funded ACFs for this period although, of course, the medical school may charge fees to other students who join any programme offered.

Should the medical school not fill its allocated posts or should posts be withdrawn because of weaknesses in the overall development programme for ACFs, an appropriate proportion of the investment will be reclaimed and the initial payment to the medical school will be subject to acceptance of this condition.

In 2011 NIHR will consult with medical schools in respect of affordable fees for ongoing formal taught training programmes for NIHR ACFs recruited in 2012 and beyond.

I am pleased NIHR is able to provide these resources. It will be good for academic clinical medicine and dentistry for all academic clinical fellows to receive a formal grounding in research methodology. I look forward to working with you to ensure that we achieve this. Any questions you may have on these arrangements should, in the first instance, be directed to John Wilkinson (John.Wilkinson@dh.gsi.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR SALLY C DAVIES
Director General of Research and Development

Appendix 2

Framework for Academic Clinical Fellows (ACF)

Available qualifications PGCert / PGDip / MSc / MRes Clinical Research

This framework is designed for junior doctors who have been awarded a place as an Academic Clinical Fellow. It meets the requirements set out by NIHR for accredited academic experience, whilst leaving the trainee free to maintain their primary focus on gaining a fellowship (Wellcome, MRC etc)

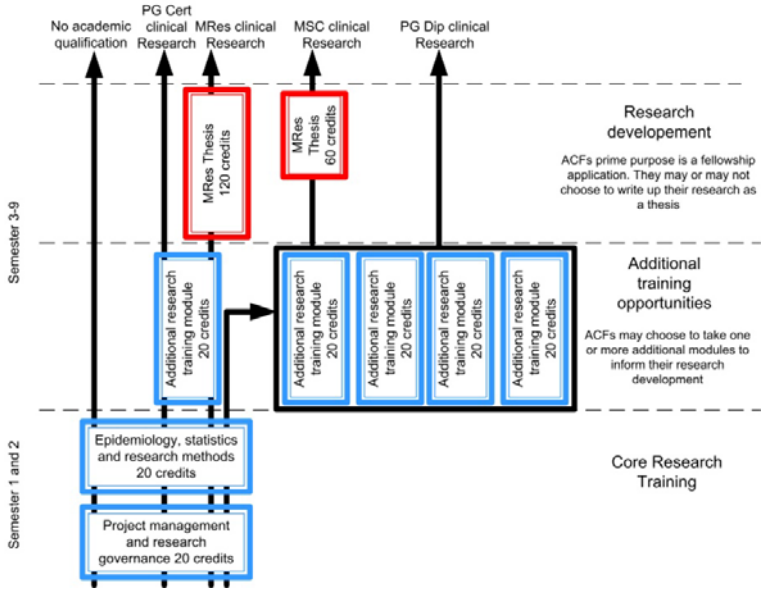
This framework will allow the trainee to select academic components which will

- develop their skills in relation to project management and research governance
- enhance their understanding of the range of available research methods and the selection of appropriate tools for statistical analysis
- inform their particular area of research interest
- maximize their potential for gaining a fellowship

All students undertake two core modules during the first year of the ACF appointment.
- Epidemiology, Statistics and Research Methods
- Project Management and Research Governance

The teaching for both of these modules is delivered in block study weeks requiring release from clinical rotas. These are both 20 credit modules.

There is no requirement to take further modules and some trainees may feel that the core modules provide all the academic input they need to enable them to complete their fellowship application.

However, they can choose to select further modules during their three year appointment from the broad range available within the College of Medical and Dental Sciences, relating to either the research process (e.g. advanced statistical methods; qualitative research) or to their particular field of interest. They can also choose to write up their research and submit it for academic assessment.

If they gain a total of 60 credits (i.e. a further 20 credits over and above the core) they are eligible for the award of Postgraduate Certificate: Clinical Research. If they undertake a total of 120 credits of taught modules, they are eligible for the award of Postgraduate Diploma: Clinical Research. They have two alternative routes to gaining a Masters Degree. If they successfully complete 60 credits worth of taught modules and 120 credits worth of submitted and approved research, they will be awarded an MRes: Clinical Research. If they successfully complete 120 credits of taught modules and 60 credits worth of submitted and approved research, they will be awarded an MSc: Clinical Research