

Guidance for applicants

Senior Fellows

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

2. Background to senior fellowship funding awards

Growing capacity and capability in healthcare improvement research is one of the THIS Institute's key goals. Building on the improvement science programmes previously run by the Health Foundation, we are committed to funding awards to support senior fellowships in improvement studies at UK universities.

Senior fellowships are an opportunity for an established researcher of international standing in a senior academic role (professorial or equivalent) to undertake a visionary, field-changing sabbatical, unencumbered by routine duties. The Institute plans to fund up to three senior fellowships each year in the period 2018 – 2027.

Applications are welcome from individuals with clinical or non-clinical professional backgrounds and from a range of disciplines. Fellows must be currently based at a UK university but may choose to spend their sabbatical at another institution, for example, another university in the UK or abroad, or a think-tank, healthcare provider or policy organisation.

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. Alongside disciplines already active in this area (such as, for example, health services research, epidemiology, and social science), we're looking for fresh thinking and contributions from many fields within and beyond healthcare, including, for example, law, business studies, philosophy, engineering and many more. The requirement will be to show how your research will add to the evidence-base and will be of relevance to the UK health system.

Fellowship awards are for six to twelve months and can be used to cover back-fill salary costs, research and/or sabbatical costs. Though the fellowships are not Cambridge-based, fellows will convene regularly in Cambridge as part of the Institute's Community of Scholars and will have access to a mentoring scheme.

Membership of the Institute's Community of Scholars

THIS Institute fellows will have a unique opportunity to be part of a vibrant and intellectually stimulating interdisciplinary and intergenerational community centered on the study of improvement in healthcare. The Community of Scholars will meet regularly at Homerton College in Cambridge and will also function as a professional learning community, providing a 'home' for researchers from a wide range of disciplines determined to work together. It is expected that senior fellows will be actively involved in these activities.

Mentoring

The Institute will broker mentoring relationships, providing links to leading thinkers in improvement research and associated fields who can support aspects of development important to the senior fellow during this period.

3. Overview of the application process

Applications are welcome from established researchers of international standing in a senior academic role (professorial or equivalent) working in any discipline or research sector that can demonstrate a role in, and contribution to, research that is focused on improving healthcare.

Applications are welcome from individuals with clinical or non-clinical professional backgrounds. Applicants must currently be based at a UK university.

Individuals must submit their applications through their university's administrative or financial authority. Applicants must contact their university department as early as possible in the application process to gain approval in principle from the Head of School / Vice Chancellor, or other senior post-holder as appropriate, to undertake the fellowship and to support release of the individual's organisational responsibilities for the planned duration of the fellowship.

Universities should ensure that there is only one fellowship application per university per funding round.

If the applicant will be based at another institution for a sabbatical, the host should be in a position to guarantee the senior fellow space and facilities for the full period of the fellowship.

A senior fellowship is intended to be held full-time for six to twelve months. We will consider awarding fellowships on a part-time basis if the applicant is already working part-time, but the award must be equate to 100% of the applicant's part-time role.

All applications must be submitted via our [Grant Tracker system](#). All applications should be submitted by an administrative authority/finance office in the applying university.

The closing date for applications is 18 September 2018, 14.00 GMT. We do not accept late applications.

4. Assessment criteria

The Institute will run a competitive assessment process to select the senior fellows. Applicants will need to set out a compelling vision for how they wish to use the time and opportunity of a senior fellowship to develop work that is likely to have significant impact within improvement research and improve the quality and safety of UK healthcare.

Applications should provide evidence relating to all the assessment criteria detailed below.

- A record of academic excellence, demonstrating innovative research that has achieved impact to inform the development of theory, methods and evidence (as appropriate to the individual's field).
- Five most significant publications relevant to the work that is proposed to be undertaken during the fellowship.
- A vision of how your proposed fellowship work will make a difference in the broad field of improvement research.
- Reflection on your personal and career development aims for the fellowship period.
- A track-record of leadership in forming collaborations to maximise influence and impact, with established collaborations that will support the delivery of the proposed work.
- Suggestions as to how you will contribute to development of THIS Institute overall, perhaps including, for example: hosting a seminar or other event, opportunities for involvement in collaborative projects, or contribution to mentoring activities of the Institute.
- Demonstration of your commitment to advancing improvement research in the future.

5. Proposed research study

We welcome proposals in the form of a vision rather than a specific project. Those that create novel interdisciplinary links will also be especially welcome. Applicants should propose examples of the metrics by which it will be possible to know whether their work has succeeded in its aims.

THIS Institute particularly welcomes applications that seek to generate scientific 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

Fellowship proposals should ideally address at least one of these scientific goals.

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 that will be evaluated
- Projects describing variation in healthcare or the epidemiology of a specific disease without an improvement strategy that will be evaluated
- Animal research
- Basic research in the biomedical sciences (including 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 will be assessed on the quality of their vision and the potential of adding significantly to the study of improvement and their potential for leadership in the field of improvement studies.

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.

6. Budgeted costs and use of funding

The fellowship funds can be used to cover back-fill salary costs, research and/or sabbatical costs up to £100,000 in total. This money can be used flexibly, but may not be used to fund additional researcher time on the project or salaries other than back-fill salary costs. Senior fellow awards are personal awards and funding is made available exclusively to release the senior fellow from routine work to enable focus on the specific work proposed for the duration of the fellowship.

Applicants are asked to provide a breakdown of all costs for supporting a senior fellowship. Costs may include:

- The amount of funding required to cover backfill salary costs. Backfill costs may arise from teaching and administrative duties or clinical commitments. The application must clearly state the proposed duration and proportion of salary.
- Research /project/sabbatical costs (can include, for example, items of small equipment, transcription costs, meeting costs, data access, expenses for service user participants, travel and accommodation for a sabbatical at home or abroad etc.).
- Dissemination and publication costs, including open-access publications.

We offer membership of the Institute's Community of Scholars and access to a mentoring scheme at no cost to senior fellows.

The Institute will only fund the directly incurred costs for the senior fellow and their research. We don't provide funds for estates, directly allocated or indirect costs. This funding is not offered on a proportion of full economic costs (FEC) basis.

Successful organisations will be issued with a formal funding agreement between the University of Cambridge and the recipient University. The exact timings for the release of funding will be discussed with each successful organisation.

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.

Applications shortlisted following peer review will be invited for a panel interview, to take place **30 October 2018**. After the interview (which may include a short presentation), the panel will select senior fellows based the extent to which they conveyed the vision of what they hope to achieve and the panel's view of those most likely to achieve significant impact and 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 will require senior fellows to complete a report to include:

- A summary of work undertaken during the senior fellowship and an assessment of the impact achieved through this, or potential for impact.
- Information on the relevant publications, presentations and other activities generated by the senior fellow to promote improvement research and/or to influence quality and safety of healthcare services.
- A reflection on personal development to include the contribution, from and to, mentoring and the Community of Scholars.
- Report of expenditure against the fellowship budget with any variances noted and an explanation provided.

The institute will develop a set of core messages and acknowledgements for the senior fellowship awards, and recipients are expected to use these when communicating externally about the fellowship awards. Fellowship award recipients should adopt the agreed institute 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** – 26 June 2018, 09.00 GMT
- **Application deadline** – 18 September 2018, 14:00 GMT
- **First stage assessment completed** – 24 September 2018
- **Short-listed candidates notified of interview** – 24 October 2018
- **Interviews** – 30 October 2018
- **Funding decision** – 2 November 2018