

Guidance for applicants: 2020 competitions v.2

Themed fellowships – COVID-19 pandemic response

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. They should also refer to the relevant Call for Applications for this scheme.

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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 the COVID-19 themed fellowship funding awards

Growing capacity and capability in healthcare improvement research is one of the THIS Institute's key goals. One of the ways we achieve this is through funding fellowship awards that can be held at any UK university or other eligible organisation of the type described below. Complementing our established programme of researcher-led fellowships, which is currently funding 22 fellows at 13 universities at every level from doctoral student to senior fellow, THIS Institute is now operating a themed fellowship programme that offers opportunities to hold fellowships on defined research projects.

In the first instance, these themed fellowships have focused on the challenges for the NHS posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme will help deliver much-needed research to support the response to the COVID-19 crisis in the short-term, as well as creating an enduring legacy and building critical mass for research and improvement leadership for the future.

Calls for Applications will be issued to address priority areas for research that have been identified by THIS Institute. These calls will specify the project(s) to be undertaken (which may be as part of a larger study), the funding available for the successful fellow(s) to undertake the work, and the timescale. The emphasis is on providing rapid

response to urgent need, so Calls for Applications will typically have short deadlines for submission. Several Calls may be issued depending on need and available resources.

This themed fellowship is suitable for individuals currently in post at UK universities or other eligible organisations of the type described below who are available to work on the specific project defined in the relevant Call for Applications. Fellowship awards will include salary costs (at the agreed proportion of FTE) and research expenses where appropriate. Fellows will also be provided with access to a professional development scheme and will be members of a supported learning community. These fellowships may be especially suitable for academic or research staff who would benefit from replacement salary while their current research is paused. Successful applicants will remain employed by their existing employing organisations.

Applicants may be clinical or non-clinical, must be currently employed in a research/academic role in a UK university or other research-intensive environment (e.g. in a charity, non-profit think tank or NHS organisation). Applicants must have support of their head of department (or equivalent), and relevant budgetary authority.

Individuals should 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.

Professional development

THIS Institute fellows will be offered a professional development programme which will be discussed on award and customised to the specifics of the fellow's needs, commitments, and fellowship duration. The programme may include, for example, membership of a learning set, coaching, and/or mentoring. Full engagement with the agreed programme will be expected.

Membership of THIS Space

THIS Institute 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 Space, convened by THIS Institute, meets regularly, functioning as a professional learning community, and providing a 'home' for researchers from a wide range of disciplines.

3 Overview of the application process

Candidates from any UK university or eligible organisation may apply to the scheme. More than one application per organisation can be submitted.

Applicants should be in a position with significant research/academic responsibilities. 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 completed via our [Fellowship Management System](#). All applications must include a statement of support. If applying from a university, this may be from the head of school/department (or equivalent); if applying from a non-university organisation this may be the individual's line manager, clinical lead or equivalent. Applications must be validated and submitted by a named individual in the university finance office or, if applying from a non-university organisation, an individual who holds budgetary authority and can confirm the commitment required for the applicant to carry out the fellowship activities during normal working hours.

Applications must be fully submitted by **12 noon on Friday 22 January 2021**. We do not accept late applications.

4 Assessment criteria

THIS Institute will run a competitive assessment process to select candidates in response to each Call for Applications.

Applicant

Applicants should show how they are well-qualified to undertake the work specified, including their skills, experience, and track record in the area. Applications should also provide evidence of the following:

- Demonstration of the strengths that the applicant will bring to delivering on the requirements of the research specified in the Call for Applications.
- Evidence of high-quality academic outputs (for example in peer-reviewed journals) relevant to the Call for Applications.
- Established or emerging research leadership, with ability to work at pace to tight deadlines without requiring close support or supervision.
- Where relevant, ability to work as part of a dispersed multidisciplinary team.
- Demonstration of a commitment to developing a career in improvement research.

Research proposal

Fellows will work on projects as specified in each Call for Applications. These projects may be conducted as part of dispersed multidisciplinary teams in which fellows will have a defined role and will lead their own element of the research.

Assessment will consider the extent to which the research proposal:

- Demonstrates understanding of the brief for the research specified in the Call for Applications.
- Effectively addresses the brief and demonstrates rigour and scholarly quality.
- Can be completed in the time specified in the Call for Applications.
- Is likely to make a valuable contribution to the field of improvement research, on its own and (where relevant) as part of a wider project.
- Is well-presented, clearly written and includes a high-quality plain English summary.

University/Home Organisation

Assessment will consider the extent to which application:

- Demonstrates that it is from a centre of academic excellence or an organisation with a strong record of research and career development for researchers.
- Shows that the organisation provides a suitable environment for the conduct of the research.
- Commits to supporting the fellow with participation in professional development activities.
- Is able to agree to THIS Institute's standard Themed Fellowships Award Contract
- Can start work on time to respond to the urgent need of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 Assessment and selection

All applications will be checked initially for eligibility and completeness. A selection panel including expert advisors will assess each application against the selection criteria, including assessment of how far the application meets the project requirements specified in the Call for Applications and is likely to maximise the opportunity to build capacity and capability in improvement research UK-wide. Short-listed applicants may optionally be invited for interview at the discretion of the panel.

6 Budgeted costs and use of funding

Each award will have a maximum budget specified in the Call for Applications. This sum will apply regardless of length or clinical/non-clinical status of fellows. Organisations may choose how they break down and allocate this sum but must clearly explain the allocation of costs. It is expected, at a minimum, the organisation will use the funding to pay for:

- Salary costs for the fellow including all on-costs (superannuation, NI and apprenticeship levy). If the application is for a fellowship to be undertaken part-time, the percentage of time on the fellowship must be clearly stated and costed for. It is expected that the salary replacement funds provided by the fellowship will be at the same level as the applicant's current salary.
- Research costs (e.g. items of small equipment, data access, transcription costs, meeting costs).
- Participation costs and expenses. Please consider the costs for engagement with a diverse range of participants and stakeholders. Examples might include such as costs for translation services, accessibility support etc.
- Dissemination and publication costs, for example open-access publications.

We offer membership of THIS Space and access to the professional development programme at no cost to fellows.

The Institute will only fund the directly incurred costs¹ for the fellow and their research. We do not provide funds for organisational overheads such as the cost of building/premises. This funding is not offered on a proportion of full economic costs (FEC) basis.

Funding is made available exclusively to support the named fellow and the defined project and should not be used for other activities or individuals. Successful organisations will be issued with a formal award letter from the University of Cambridge

¹ THIS Institute will only fund directly incurred costs. Direct costs are those items that are specifically purchased for the project. They are charged on the basis of cash amount spent and are verifiable and auditable from the accounting records, i.e. invoices for non-pay expenditure and payroll for staffing. Examples would be staff costs specifically for the project, consumables, travel and small items of equipment.

requiring countersignature by the recipient organisation. Applying organisations will be required to agree to THIS Institute's standard Themed Fellowships Award Conditions at the time of application.

7 Monitoring and reporting requirements

The institute will require fellows to submit a report to include:

- A final research report including background, methods, results, and discussion
- Interim reports against project milestones on a timescale agreed at the outset of the project
- Information on the fellow's publications, presentations, engagement activities and other outputs of the fellowship.
- A reflection on personal development, including, where appropriate to the length of the fellowship, evidence of expanded networks and enhanced academic leadership.
- Report of expenditure against the fellowship budget with any variances noted and an explanation provided.

The Institute's communications team will develop a set of core messages and acknowledgements for the 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.

8 Competition timetable

Competition opens – Monday 16 November 2020, 09:00 GMT

Application deadline – Friday 22 January 2021, 12:00 GMT

Funding decision – by end of February 2021

[Please note that our office be closed for questions about fellowships from Monday 21 Dec 2020 to Monday 4 January 2021. If you have scoping queries or questions about the fellowship programme, please contact our office before these dates.](#)

Office email: fellowships@thisinstitute.cam.ac.uk