Academy of Medical Sciences and the University of Edinburgh postdoctoral policy immersion scheme

Summary
The Academy of Medical Sciences and the University of Edinburgh are pleased to open applications to their new postdoctoral policy immersion scheme.

Under this scheme, University of Edinburgh Postdoctoral researchers will have the opportunity to undertake a fully funded 12-week policy immersion placement at the Academy of Medical Sciences, the UK's National Academy for biomedical and health research.

This new postdoctoral policy immersion scheme builds on the more than 10 years of successful PhD student policy internships run by the Academy, and we are delighted to offer this new scheme specifically tailored for postdoctoral researchers.

The scheme is designed to give successful candidates first-hand experience of the medical science policy and communications environment, to gain insights into how research can impact on policy, and to build valuable networks with the UK's most eminent medical scientists and key science and health stakeholders.

The details of the scheme are set out below. In brief, Postdoctoral researchers will be supported by a fully funded 12-week stipend, including relocation expenses to London for the duration of the immersion. Throughout the 12-weeks, the successful candidate will lead on the delivery of a bespoke project that will expose them a range of activities supporting evidence-based policy. All eligible candidates will be assessed through a competitive application process.

Interviews for this opportunity will be conducted remotely. We would expect successful candidates to relocate to London for the period of their immersion, with the cost of this relocation and associated travel covered by the scheme. Given the ongoing uncertainty around COVID-19, successful candidates will be kept closely informed on any potential impacts on their immersion period, and how these can be mitigated or managed. The Academy of Medical Sciences is currently working in an agile way with staff working both from home and from our Central London offices.

The deadline for applications is 12 noon on Monday 20 June. Interviews will be conducted in the weeks commencing 20 and 27 June.

What the scheme provides
The scheme will:
- Provide researchers and emerging leaders with a deeper understanding of medical science policy.

- Contribute to the exploration of medical science in its wider cultural context by helping to build bridges between the scientific community and policymakers.
- Enable researchers to work at the interface between medical science and policymaking.
- Allow successful candidates to build valuable contacts with senior scientists and policymakers, and expose them to the wide range of public, charitable and commercial organisations involved in UK medical science.

Eligibility

The scheme is open to all University of Edinburgh Postdoctoral researchers. We welcome applications from all backgrounds and specialisms, and working in the biomedical or health sciences is not a prerequisite for applying.

To be eligible, the candidate's University of Edinburgh employment contract dates must cover the period of the immersion.

Placements on the scheme are allocated on a competitive basis so withdrawal from the scheme once a place is accepted is likely to result in another potential successful candidate being denied the opportunity to participate.

About the Academy of Medical Sciences

The Academy of Medical Sciences is the independent, expert voice of biomedical and health research in the UK. Our mission is to help create an open and progressive research sector to improve the health of people everywhere.

- We support researchers with innovative funding and career development opportunities.
- We help create a more sustainable environment for delivering outstanding research.
- We help researchers to work with academia, public, policymakers and industry to make the greatest difference to health.

Our strengths are:

- A Fellowship of the most influential scientists in the UK and worldwide
- An inspiring community of emerging and established research leaders
- A vibrant and growing global network of partnerships and collaborations
- An ability to influence policy by connecting the insights of our Fellowship, researchers, patients and public
- The involvement of patients and the public in shaping our work
- A talented and committed staff team who embody our values
- Our Royal Charter and charitable status

Find out more about the Academy by visiting our website: https://acmedsci.ac.uk/about

Policy immersion activities

The Academy's policy work addresses issues of medical science, healthcare and research careers. Areas of policy work originate from within the Academy's Council and wider Fellowship and staff as well as in response to issues raised by Government, Parliament and

other relevant bodies, including stakeholders such as industry, medical research charities, medical Royal Colleges and regulators.

During the 12-week immersion, successful candidates will likely lead on the delivery of one of projects detailed below. Delivering one of these projects will provide experience of activities that may include:

- One-to-one stakeholder engagement with Academy Fellows or external organisations in order to gather views and evidence, and to communicate findings and policy positions.
- Organising and convening events such as workshops or roundtables with experts from across the life sciences sector with a view to gathering perspectives and interrogating evidence or policy.
- Desk-based research and scoping, e.g. preparing project proposals or undertaking literature reviews.
- Drafting and supporting the publication of a policy report that outlines the gathered evidence and views in a succinct format for policymakers.
- Disseminating messages from the report to policymakers.

Structure of the scheme
The 12-week immersions will be full-time positions based at the Academy of Medical Sciences' offices in London. To facilitate this time away from research, successful candidates will be supported by a stipend provided by the University of Edinburgh's Wellcome ISSF grant that covers salary and any additional costs (e.g. Relocation and/or travel) during this period.

Successful candidates will be supervised by a designated member of Academy's policy staff and will have responsibility for the delivery of a project within their immersion (see below for details). Successful candidates will also have the opportunity meet with and work alongside Academy staff, including in communications, public engagement, grants and programmes, as well as Fellows and researchers from the Academy networks.

Reporting
The successful candidates will be expected to write a short report at the end of their placement based on their experience. This is not expected to be an onerous task and further information will be given at the recruitment stage.

Two immersions are available:
- October to December 2022
- January to March 2023

Please specify your preference for these two slots in your application (see below for further details), though we cannot guarantee that you will be offered your first choice.

Successful candidates are likely to work on one of the projects below, subject to policy priorities for the Academy at the time of the immersion.

Available projects
There are six potential projects available for immersion successful candidates. We will discuss your preference for projects at the interview stage.

Landscape reviews
In recent years, the Academy has published working group reports looking at a range of high-impact research and policy areas. Successful candidates will lead on a landscape review of policy and research developments since publication, with a focus on:
- The impact of the report and its recommendations
- Changes in the research or policy environment since publication
- The ongoing relevance of recommendations and potential future activities

Potential landscape review projects include:

1. <u>Team science</u> (2016)

In March 2016, the Academy of Medical Sciences published a working group report on *'Improving recognition of team science contributions in biomedical research careers'*. 'Team science' is becoming increasingly common across all fields of research. Teams spanning different specialties and geographical centres are often needed to tackle contemporary research questions in biomedical science. However, current recognition frameworks do not always adequately capture or celebrate individuals' contributions to team science projects.

In 2018, two years on from the launch of the original team science report, the Academy held a follow-up workshop to assess progress made against the report's recommendations.

This project will examine the ongoing state of the team science approach to research, looking at progress against the recommendations in the 2016 report. In particular, this project will examine the results of the 2021 Research Excellence Framework exercise and how the 2016 report recommendations were reflected in the process and the outcomes.

2. <u>The use of animals in research</u> (ongoing)

The Academy has advocated for the responsible use of animals in research, including the uptake of the 3Rs principles, and the governance and regulation of animals containing human material.

This project will look at outstanding and emerging issues for the use of animals in research, such as the impact of new technologies or techniques, and the changing UK and international policy landscape governing their use.

3. <u>Enhancing the use of scientific evidence</u> (2017)

In 2017, the Academy published a working group report looking at how scientific evidence is used in decision making about the benefits and harms of medicines and other medical interventions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted ongoing challenges regarding the communication of scientific evidence, including risk and uncertainty. This project will look at the relevance

of recommendations related to the communication of scientific evidence, and the impact on public trust in light of the experiences and learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Multiple long-term conditions (MLTC) (2018)

The Academy's international working group report on *'Multimorbidity: a priority for global health research'*, developed a definition, standardised reporting system and key research priorities for MLTC. Following this, the Academy, MRC, NIHR, and Wellcome hosted a joint workshop in June 2018 on *'Advancing research to tackle multimorbidity: the UK and LMIC perspectives'.*

This landscape review will look at the state of MLTC research five years on and the impact the 2018 report has had on influencing research and policy priorities in the UK and internationally.

5. Health of the Public in 2040 (2016)

Over the coming decades, the UK population will face a wide range of complex health challenges and opportunities, many of which can only be fully addressed through strategies to secure and improve the health of the public as a whole. The Academy's report, *'Improving the health of the public by 2040'*, explored how to organise our research environment to generate and translate the evidence needed to underpin such strategies. The report concluded that while public health research has provided fundamental insights into human health, there remains much we do not know about the complex array of interlinking factors that influence the health of the public, and about how to prevent and solve the many health challenges we face as a population.

This project will look at the implications of the new public health and NHS structures for public health research and policy, and how we can innovate and translate public and population health research to improve health across the UK, with a particular emphasis on reducing health inequalities.

6. Reproducibility and reliability of research (2015)

The Academy of Medical Sciences, jointly with the BBSRC, MRC and the Wellcome Trust, held a symposium in 2015 to explore the challenges and opportunities for improving the reproducibility and reliability of biomedical research in the UK.

Questions about the reproducibility of scientific research have been raised in a number of different arenas over the last few years, including the general and scientific media, sparked in part by an increase in the number of retracted papers and a failure by industry to replicate findings in 'landmark' papers. The consequences are potentially significant for many areas of biological and broader scientific research.

In 2022 the reproducibility and reliability of research remains and outstanding issue, and this project will look at progress since 2015, as well as ongoing challenges that impact or influence reproducibility of research and how they might be addressed.

Application procedure
Please submit your applications through the Cezanne online portal.

Candidates are asked to supply:
- A short covering letter briefly describing their reasons for applying and any experience they have had in science policy or communication, or related fields.
- Any relevant institutional permission from their administration office including written permission from their line manager (if relevant, you should also seek permission from your funder before applying).
- Expression of preference as to the timing of the immersion.
- A two page CV.

Short-listed applicants will be invited to an interview with a selection panel of Academy and University of Edinburgh staff.

Applications should be submitted through the Cezanne online portal and must be received by **12 noon on Monday 20 June 2022**. Interviews will be conducted in the **weeks commencing 20 or 27 June 2022**.

Project queries should be directed to Dr James Squires, Interim Head of Policy at the Academy of Medical Sciences: james.squires@acmedsci.ac.uk
Other queries should be directed to Lorraine Jackson, Translational Projects at the University of Edinburgh: Lorraine.jackson@ed.ac.uk

The placements are funded by the University of Edinburgh's Wellcome ISSF scheme.