



## **ERS Fellowship Programme on Guideline Methodology**

### **Rules and Regulations**

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# 1. General description and aims

This document sets out the rules and regulations governing the ERS fellowship programme on guideline methodology for candidates.

By submitting an ERS fellowship application, candidates agree to comply with the ERS rules and regulations. Moreover, candidates are expected to endorse the aims of the ERS fellowship programme on guideline methodology.

This fellowship is granted for training in guideline methodology, thus it is a mandatory requirement that the successful candidate is involved in projects that include hands-on training on guideline development. Accordingly, the fellowship on guideline methodology should lead to guideline development activities within the ERS during and after the fellowship.

This fellowship will not be granted for undergraduate studies, meetings, conferences, congresses or for visiting other institutions not involved in guideline development.

## 1.1. General description

- a. ERS provides young scientists with a unique opportunity to gain theoretical knowledge as well as practical experience on developing evidence-based guidelines.
- b. In order to address all aspects of high quality guideline development and follow the standards outlined by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), ERS has established a fellowship programme on guideline methodology that is divided into two parts:
  - i) Training in systematic reviews in a specialised centre (Cochrane Iberoamerica)
  - ii) Placement in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which will give the fellow the unique opportunity to observe and take part in different stages of guideline development.

## 1.2. Aims

- a. To provide ERS members with the opportunity to gain knowledge as well as practical experience in the methodology of developing guidelines, using the most up to date evidence-based methods, including systematic reviews and evidence appraisal using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach.
- b. To contribute to transfer and implementation of state of the art guideline development methodology internationally.
- c. To support young scientists, clinicians and allied health professionals in the early stages of their career to acquire new skills and techniques and gain experience in evidence-based guideline development.

## 2. Eligibility criteria

- a. Candidates should be currently engaged in, have been involved in the past, or have a high interest in evidence-based medicine, methodology or guideline development.
- b. Applicants must be postgraduates holding a university degree in any field related to respiratory medicine or science (MD, MSc, PhD or MD-PhD). As a minimum requirement applicants need to have graduated with an MD, MSc or equivalent at the time of application. Candidates may also be qualified professionals (non-MD) working or having interest in working in evidence-based medicine (epidemiologists, statisticians or allied health professionals).
- c. ERS does not apply an upper age limit on candidates. However, priority is given to applicants in the early stages of their career.
- d. Candidates must be fluent in English.
- e. ERS membership at the time of application is preferred. Non-ERS members selected for the fellowship programme are required to obtain a membership upon notification of selection. More information about how to become an ERS member can be found online ([www.ersnet.org/membership](http://www.ersnet.org/membership)).
- f. This fellowship programme is open to candidates based in Europe.

## 3. Responsibility of fellowship recipients

### 3.1. Full-time commitment

The fellowship is to be carried out on a full time basis (100% working time appointment at the host institution dedicated to work on the suggested fellowship work plan). The fellowship recipient should not be engaged in any paid or salaried activities other than those related to the ERS training plan during the course of their fellowship.

### 3.2. Insurance and taxes

- a. ERS does not recognise recipients of its fellowships as agents or employees of ERS and accepts no liability in respect of any of their actions or activities or in respect to their health or safety. It is the responsibility of the fellowship recipient to be properly insured during the fellowship at the host institute.
- b. Fellowship recipients are not insured by ERS against medical expenses for themselves or their families; neither are they insured for accidents during their travel to and from the host institution. Fellowship recipients are encouraged to ensure that they are fully covered by the necessary insurances. It is the sole responsibility of the recipient of a fellowship to ensure that he/she is covered under a social security scheme providing protection at least equivalent to those of local trainees holding a similar position.
- c. ERS is an international non-governmental organisation whose fellowships are not automatically endowed with any particular tax privileges. It is the sole responsibility of the fellowship recipient to pay any tax which may be levied upon him/her by the appropriate national authority. ERS is not responsible for any tax issue that may arise either in the home or in the host country and any payable taxes must be paid from the fellowship funds.

### 3.3. Unexpected event or work plan change

- a. The ERS fellowship programme on guideline methodology should be carried out exclusively as outlined in the fellowship agreement and may not be amended.
- b. ERS should be notified of any event or circumstance which might affect the running of the fellowship programme or that is likely to have an effect on the performance of the candidate. ERS must be made aware of fellowships that are terminated prematurely and the fellowship recipient will be responsible for reimbursement of the appropriate funds.
- c. If there are any problems, the fellowship recipient has the opportunity to report these to ERS, who, in such cases, will contact the host in order to find a resolution. In extreme circumstances ERS may decide to prematurely terminate the fellowship.
- d. Any infringement of the conditions contained in this document will result in the withdrawal of an application from the selection process or the cancellation of funds already transferred.

### 3.4. Reporting

Within 1 month of the end of each part of the fellowship programme, the fellowship recipient is expected to submit a report carrying the endorsement of the host supervisor and a completed ERS fellowship questionnaire.

### 3.5. Publications

Any publication or outcome related to the fellowship must acknowledge the ERS support.

### 3.6. Commitment for involvement in ERS activities after completion of the fellowship programme

- a. Upon completion of the full fellowship programme and in order to enable knowledge dissemination, the fellowship recipient is expected to take part in at least one ERS task force aiming to produce a guideline, by performing methodological tasks (such as systematic reviews and grading of the evidence), under the guidance of one of the ERS in-house methodologists. The topic of the guidelines may differ from the field of expertise of the fellow.

## 4. Role of ERS

- a. ERS is the sole funder of this fellowship programme.
- b. ERS is responsible for the organisational aspects of this fellowship programme.
- c. One of the ERS methodologists will oversee the fellowship recipient's training by maintaining regular contact with the fellowship successful candidates and their supervisor(s).

## 5. Role of the host institutions

### 5.1 First part of the fellowship programme: Cochrane Iberoamerica

- a. Cochrane Iberoamerica shall host the fellow within its premises in Barcelona, Spain, for the duration of the first part of the fellowship programme (3 months).
- b. Cochrane Iberoamerica shall act as a host unit, with a defined supervisor (mentor). The supervisor will assure the acquisition of key concepts, as well as facilitate the candidates' participation in work meetings and discussions.
- c. During the placement, the selected candidate will be expected to observe/ participate in as many steps of systematic review development as possible, including formulating questions, conducting literature searches, extracting data, assessing study quality, conducting meta-analyses, appraising evidence using the GRADE approach, creating summary of findings tables, etc.
- d. The above-mentioned training activities are mainly relevant to systematic reviews about interventions (clinical trials assessing the effectiveness and safety of treatments or strategies). Depending on the focus of interest of the fellowship recipient, the training programme can include concepts of systematic reviews and assessment of diagnostic studies and/or observational studies.
- e. The successful candidate will undertake a systematic review in a project of - as much as possible - his/her own interest under the guidance of the host supervisor. Otherwise the fellowship recipient can be incorporated in an on-going Cochrane systematic review or any other non-Cochrane systematic review under development during his/her training period under the guidance of the host supervisor.

### 5.2 Second part of the fellowship programme: NICE

- a. NICE shall host the fellowship recipient within their premises in Manchester, UK for the duration of the second part of the fellowship programme (3 months).
- b. NICE shall act as a host unit, with a defined supervisor (mentor). The supervisor will assure the acquisition of key concepts, as well facilitate the fellowship recipient's participation in different committee meetings and discussions. NICE shall provide the successful candidate with an adequate workplace and ensure frequent contact with the supervisor and other staff relevant for the training.
- c. During the placement, the fellowship recipient will be expected to observe/participate in as many steps of guideline development as possible (including evidence review, developing and wording of recommendations, incorporating stakeholders' comments, guideline dissemination and update etc.). Where possible, the fellowship recipient will be actively working on one or more of the above steps of guideline development under supervision, as deemed fit by the host supervisor.
- d. The successful candidate will undertake a short project relevant to guideline development of his/her own interest under the guidance of the host supervisor.

### 5.3 Responsibilities of all host institutions for both parts of the fellowship programme

- a. The host supervisor of each institution will be required, before the beginning of the project, to confirm in writing that he/she is prepared to receive the successful candidate and provide the necessary facilities. Written confirmation by the host supervisor should include a starting date and a confirmation of the host's responsibilities which include availability of office space and ability to conduct the agreed activities.
- b. The host institutions will be requested to ensure the fulfilment of both practical and training aspects which are relevant: prior to the fellowship (administrative requirements for admission); during the fellowship (training sessions, regular meetings and evaluations); during the follow-up of the fellowship (reporting).
- c. The host supervisor must be able to act on behalf of the host institution in any matters related to the fellowship programme and will monitor the progress of the fellowship recipient according to the work plan agreed. The host supervisor is expected to accommodate only one fellowship recipient at a time (up to two a year).
- d. Within one month of the end of the fellowship programme, the host supervisor is expected to submit an end-of-project report and a completed ERS fellowship questionnaire.

## 6. Application and selection process

### 6.1. General information on submission

- a. Applications and all supporting documents must be submitted in English and online using the following link: <https://www.ersnet.org/professional-development/fellowships/fellowships-on-guideline-methodology>
- b. The ERS selects up to two fellows on guideline methodology annually.

### 6.2. Timeline

- a. Application deadline  
Fellowships in guideline methodology are granted annually. The deadline for submission of applications is Monday June 17, 2019.
- b. Interviews  
Candidates selected for a face-to-face interview will be notified in August 2019. Interviews will take place at the ERS International Congress in Madrid between September 28-October 2, 2019. If the candidate is not attending the Congress, he/she could be interviewed via teleconference.
- c. Start date
  - i) Selected applicants will be notified of their appointment end of September 2019.
  - ii) The exact starting dates will be discussed and agreed upon between the selected candidates and the hosting institutions.
  - iii) The first part of the fellowship programme is expected to start beginning of 2020.

The start date should allow for sufficient time after the expected date of the funding decision for the successful candidate to complete travel, visa, and housing formalities.

Fellowships are not granted in retrospect for projects already fully or partly carried out.

#### Duration of the fellowship programme

- d. ERS fellowships in guideline methodology are intended for periods up to 6 months in total (3 months for the first part and 3 months for the second part)
- e. The two parts of the fellowship programme have to be carried out in a continuous time period and may not be split or reduced.
- f. The duration of the fellowship programme should not be changed without approval of ERS. If any reduction is accepted by ERS, the grant amount will be reduced accordingly.

### 6.3. Required documents

- a. To apply, the following files should be uploaded to the ERS online submission platform:
  - i) Candidate's short curriculum vitae (two pages maximum).
  - ii) Candidate's list of publications, ordered as follows: clinical practice guidelines or systematic reviews; original peer-reviewed papers; review articles; any other relevant publication (e.g. meeting abstracts with relevance to the application).
  - iii) Letter of motivation (one page maximum): This is the most important component of the application and should be prepared by the applicant. The letter of motivation must not exceed one page (font size 12 pts, Times New Roman or Arial). It should outline the reasons why the applicant is interested in the fellowship programme, as well as any relevant experience he/she may already have in the field of guideline development or evidence-based medicine. It should also state how the fellowship programme will be advancing his/her career and in which ways he/she will be able to use what he/she learned in the future.
  - iv) Scanned candidate's digital ID photo in high resolution (300 dpi).
  - v) Scanned copy of candidate's passport or ID.
  - vi) Scanned copy of candidate's highest academic degree.
- b. Compliance with the required length of application documents is mandatory.
- c. The information provided by applicants in the online application form will automatically be compiled and transmitted to the ERS methodologists and ERS Guidelines Director. Therefore, applicants should be aware that fellowships are awarded based on the quality of information provided.

### 6.4. Selection process

- a. Funding programmes are the responsibility of the ERS Science Council and the final decision is the responsibility of the ERS Executive Committee following the recommendations of the Science Council. In order to keep a high standard of applications and quality of this fellowship programme, the ERS will strictly enforce these fellowship management rules.

- b. ERS awards fellowships to applicants based on scientific merit. To achieve this, selection is made after careful and in-depth evaluation of applications by following the procedure below.
- c. Complete applications meeting the eligibility criteria will be reviewed by the two ERS methodologists and the ERS Guidelines Director. Their recommendations will be presented to the ERS Guidelines Working Group as well as representatives of the host institutes.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to a face-to-face interview during the ERS International Congress or by teleconference during the same time. The interview panel will consist of the ERS Guidelines Director, and at least one of the two ERS methodologists. The host supervisor(s) and a member of the ERS Guidelines Working group may also attend the interviews.

- d. During the review of the applications, the quality and scientific value of the application and supporting documents will be assessed.
- e. The candidates and their applications will be evaluated and graded based on the following criteria:
  - i) Scientific qualifications of the candidate
  - ii) Motivation for involvement in guideline development
  - iii) Previous experience with guideline development and/or evidence-based medicine
- f. The assessments are strictly confidential and cannot be divulged outside the ERS or to the candidates themselves.
- g. No distinction will be made between candidates on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion or political opinions.
- h. Appeals will not be considered unless formal mistakes have been made by the ERS.

## 7. Grant

### 7.1. Calculation

- a. A fixed amount is calculated for each fellowship and is set as an ERS grant amount at the beginning of the training. The fellowship provides the recipient with a subsistence allowance to cover living costs and a flat rate for travelling expenses to the host institution. The fellowship is not intended to cover any other expenses.
- b. The subsistence rates are indicated per month in euros (2,500 euros per month for Spain and 3,000 euros per month for the UK), for a recipient not receiving any other income (salary, funding, travel grant, etc.). They are indicative and subject to change, depending on the available yearly ERS fellowship budget and the variable inflation, exchange rates and the cost of living in the host country.
- c. Further to the subsistence rates, the ERS will provide a flat amount intended to cover the fellow's recipient travel:



- i) From home to first host institution (Spain )
- ii) From first host institution (Spain) to second host institution (UK)
- iii) From second host institution (UK) to home

A one-off lump sum travel grant of €200 is granted for distances between host and home units below 5,000km. This amount is of € 400 for scientifically developing countries. For distances above 5,000km the travel flat rate is of €700 and €1'200 for fellowship recipients coming from scientifically developing countries

- d. ERS does not provide the fellowship recipients with support fees, any other contribution to the costs of the training or any other financial support for social security and safety schemes.

## 7.2. Deductions

- a. If the fellowship recipient is receiving income from the home/host institutions during his/her fellowship, this amount will be deducted from the ERS monthly subsistence rate.
- b. The fellowships may not be financially supplemented by agencies other than the host institutions, or the recipients personally. Therefore they may not run concurrently with other awards, funds, grants, fellowships, etc. during the same time period and in relation to the same project.
- c. Financial supplements that are permitted to fellowship recipients, to be supplied by the home and/or host institutions without deduction on the ERS grant amount, are financial aid to cover the recipient's obligatory health and safety insurances, legal and social security insurances, pension schemes and child support in the home and host country.
- d. If the applicant is already in the country of the host institution, the travel costs will be adjusted.