



NHS Scientist Training Programme: Perspectives of two audiology trainees

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Scientist Training Programme (STP) – What is it?



- Administered by the National School for Healthcare Science (NSHCS).
- The STP can be completed in a broad range of healthcare science specialisms such as audiology, genomics, nuclear medicine, cardiac science, etc.
- To apply, you must have a 1st or 2:1 bachelor's or MSc degree in a science subject relevant to the specialty for which you are applying.
- Aim of the STP is to produce graduates who will possess the technical knowledge, research ability, complex decision-making skills, communication skills, and professionalism required of a Clinical Scientist in the NHS.
- It is a 3-year programme which has both workplace and academic components (80:20 split). Trainees are employed on a fixed-term Band 6 contract.
- Trainees must complete a workplace training and assessment e-portfolio, a part-time, fully-funded MSc in Clinical Science, and a final NSHCS assessment.

Scientist Training Programme (STP) – What is it?



- Two universities in the UK offer the audiology STP:
 - The University of Manchester
 - Aston University
- Two entry routes:
 - In-service and direct entry.
- NHS England allocate the university places
- For in-service applicants, you stay at your employing trust to complete the programme whereas direct entry applicants rank the centres which they would like to train at.



Scientist Training Programme (STP) - What is it?

- The University tuition fees are fully funded
- Trainees are paid at a Band 6 salary throughout their training.
- Additional funding to support travel and accommodation at university is provided. It is at the employer's discretion as to what exactly the funding can be used for, but trainees are allocated £2000 a year.
- Generally, trainees work 9am-5pm, although the work hours are determined by your employer.

The structure of the Scientist Training Programme



University

MSc in Clinical Science:

- a part-time, fully funded, master's degree
- Academic teaching and assessment



Employer

Work-based training:

- Practical training and assessment
- Contract of employment

Audiology MSc modules at the University of Manchester

Module Titles

Year 3
Research Project
(45 credits)

Year 2	Research Methods (15 credits generic)	Adult Auditory Assessment & Management (15 credits)	Paediatric Audiology (15 credits)	Vestibular Assessment & Management (15 credits)	Research Project (15 credits)
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Year 1	Professional Practice (15 credits)	Neurosensory Science (15 credits)	Clinical Applications to Neurosensory Science (30 credits)
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Scientist Training Programme (STP) - e-portfolio

- Academic teaching is assessed through exams and assignments at the University of Manchester while practical skills are assessed through work-based competencies on an e-portfolio.
- Competencies are assessed through the online system 'Onefile'. Competencies reflect on our clinical practice and demonstrate we are competent in different aspects of healthcare science.
- Modules include Audiology, Neurophysiology, Ophthalmic and Vision Science, Vestibular Assessment, Adult rehabilitation, Paediatric Audiology and Epidemiology and Public Health as well as a leadership module.
- During the first year of the STP, trainees' complete rotations in neurophysiology, ophthalmic and vision science and imaging to support the completion of their competencies. The rest of the competencies are completed inhouse.



Scientist Training Programme (STP) - Assessments

- In the final year, trainees complete a research project. Work for this begins at the end of the first year and continues for the next two years.
- At the end of the final year trainees also complete an 'IACC' - Independent Assessment of Clinical Competence.
- The IACC assesses the trainee's readiness to practice as a newly qualified Clinical Scientist.
- The IACC is a 3500-word reflective essay following the 5 domains of Good Scientific Practice. Trainees use evidence provided in their OneFile e-portfolio to support their reflection.
- As part of the IACC trainees will also attend a 1-hour interview to discuss their reflective essay and to discuss 2 unseen cases.
- The IACC is graded as 'Pass' or 'Fail' and trainees have a maximum of 3 attempts to pass within a 2-year period.



STP Application Process

- Two different entry routes
- Direct Entry
 - Open to anyone with at least a "2:1 undergraduate degree in a relevant science subject or with a 2:2 and a relevant master's degree.
- In-service
 - Open for existing NHS staff working in the recognised scientific speciality who meet the same qualification requirements of the direct entry route.



STP Application Process – Direct entry route

- Application process opens in January for England and Wales. Limited ad-hoc recruitment can take place in Scotland and NI throughout the year.
- Process involves an online application form in which applicants provide information about meeting the person specification for the programme, including qualifications, experience and motivation and an online situational judgement test (SJT) which evaluates core attributes needed for the programme.
- Short-listed applicants rank NHS trusts (providing the STP in their desired specialism) in order of preference which is then used to allocate applicants to interviews .
- Interviews are carried out by the employing trusts who make the final decision whether the applicant is successful and can begin the STP.



STP Application Process – In-service route

- Similar process to the direct entry route although applicants do not go through longlisting or shortlisting as they have already gone through the recruitment and selection process for their existing post.
- Employing trust must sponsor the applicant.
- Applicants will have a local interview with their employer which is sent to the NSHCS.
- If entry requirements are met and their employer agrees to sponsor them, they will be accepted onto the programme.
- Applicants will remain at the same location where they are employed for their training.
- Applicants are released from service duties to undertake education and training.



Lisa's experience of the Audiology STP at GSTT

- I studied Audiology as my undergraduate at university (PTP programme) and upon graduation I went straight into a Band 5 job at Guy's and St Thomas' where I worked for two years before applying for the STP in 2021.
- I applied through the in-service route as I was already employed as an audiologist at Guy's and St Thomas'.
- I knew I wanted to complete some further training however I was unsure whether to apply for the STP of MSc in Advanced Audiology at UCL.
- The STP provides both academic teaching as well as practical teaching compared to the MSc in Advanced Audiology which lacks the practical aspect. As I wanted to make sure I was able to improve my clinical skills the STP appealed to me due to the practical teaching.



Fiontán's experience of the Audiology STP at Manchester Royal

- I studied pharmacology at uni and worked as an R&D Scientist in the biochemistry field for 5 years after graduating in 2016, so audiology was completely new to me when I started the STP in 2021.
- Manchester Royal audiology department provides a wide range of audiology services (Paeds, Adults, Vestib assess & rehab, BCD, CI, Hearing Therapy, etc.), is involved in lots of research, and staff are really accommodating - great place to learn the ropes!
- MSc is delivered by University of Manchester which is across the road from the hospital. Completely online in 1st year due to COVID but then moved to in-person.
- The Audiology STP is a demanding programme which involves lots of organisation to stay on top of the academic and workplace components... Motivation is key – must be passionate about clinical care, scientific research & innovation, and improving services for patients.

