

02_What are my responsibilities in regards to approving a prospective Associate PI for the Associate PI Scheme?

As the Local PI, it is your responsibility to approve any applicant who applies to work on the study for which you are the Local PI at your site. Below, you'll find additional guidance on this matter.

Initial Conversation

We require applicants to communicate with the Local PI of the study for which they wish to become an Associate PI before applying for the scheme. This provides an opportunity for you to evaluate them against the eligibility criteria (please refer to further details under 'Eligible Applicants') and assess whether they are suitable candidates for participation in the Scheme.

Participating in the Scheme will be in addition to an applicant's core responsibilities. Hence, it is crucial to discuss with them whether they believe they have adequate capacity to engage in both the Scheme and their primary role. Please note that there is no funding associated with the Associate PI Scheme.

Moreover, while the Associate PI Scheme accommodates all healthcare professional roles, participation is contingent upon the available studies. As the Local PI, your agreement is necessary to ascertain if an applicant's involvement in a study aligns with the required criteria outlined in the Associate PI checklist.

Should you find an applicant eligible, it is encouraged to guide them through the application process using the Associate PI Scheme Applicant Application Form, accessible on our website [linked here](#). Anyone interested in joining the Scheme as an Associate PI must complete this form.

However, if you believe an applicant is unsuitable for participation, kindly inform them accordingly.

As part of the application process, the Associate PI Scheme team will email you, the Local PI, to seek approval for the applicant's inclusion in the scheme. Your prompt response to these approval emails is appreciated to ensure the timely processing of an applicant's registration. Please note that the email will originate from 'moodlemailer@nihr.ac.uk' (no reply)."

Eligible Applicants

The Associate PI Scheme is open to any health and care professional (such as doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, healthcare scientists, dietitians, etc.) who is not currently funded for research work.

There are specific eligibility criteria that an applicant must meet to join the Associate PI Scheme:

1. They must be a healthcare professional who wants to gain knowledge of what it means to deliver an NIHR portfolio trial.

2. They should commit to 6 months of work on a study registered in the Scheme at their local site. Note that this commitment is in addition to their regular core responsibilities.
3. They must not currently be employed to work in research.
4. Applicable to 'Fellows' only:
 - a. They must not be receiving funding to work on the Study they are applying for.

As mentioned earlier, although all healthcare professional roles are welcome to participate in the Scheme, its scope depends on the available studies. As the Local PI, your agreement is necessary to ensure that an applicant's participation in a study aligns with the mandated Associate PI checklist criteria. It's recognised that not all professional roles may fit every study.

We would advise that you as the Local PI should decide whether or not their professional role is suitable for the study they are applying to work on and whether they will be able to undertake all the elements of the [Associate PI Scheme Checklist](#) for their chosen study within their current role and that your delegated duties are in line with the safety requirements of the protocol.

Prospective Associate PIs must commit to 6 months of study work in addition to their regular duties. Hence, discussing their capacity to fulfil this commitment is essential.

Acknowledging that some trainees may be on rotations, we permit Associate PIs to continue in the Scheme if they relocate to another site mid-tenure, provided the study operates at the new site and the new Local PI approves their involvement.

When can an Associate PI join the Scheme?

We aim for Associate PIs to gain experience in running and delivering a study, ideally during its open and recruiting phase. Consequently, we prefer Associate PIs to apply for the Scheme when the study they wish to work on is actively recruiting at their site.

Nevertheless, we do permit Associate PIs to engage in the set-up stage as it offers valuable experience. However, we require that the site has submitted the capacity and capability form to the R&D department to indicate proximity to the study's opening before the Associate PI registers.

Therefore, we encourage you to prompt Associate PIs to join the Associate PI Scheme when the desired study is actively recruiting at your site. Yet, if someone expresses interest in joining for a study not yet open, you may suggest they apply provided the capacity and capability form for that study has been submitted to your R&D department.

Ineligible Applicants

Individuals already receiving funding for research in their primary role, like Research Nurses, are ineligible to participate in the Associate PI Scheme. The Scheme targets individuals who do not have the opportunity to engage in research as part of their core responsibilities.

Moreover, following discussions with research nurses, the scheme has been determined as insufficiently advanced for those already involved in research. Consequently, we discourage their participation in a scheme that wouldn't offer further development opportunities.

Approval Process

As the Local PI, you'll be required to approve applicants seeking to join the Associate PI Scheme for the study you oversee at your site. The Associate PI Scheme Team will send you an email from 'moodlemailer@nihr.ac.uk' (no reply) whenever we receive an application from individuals intending to join the Scheme for your study at your site.

As previously mentioned, we request that applicants engage in a conversation with you before applying for the scheme. This allows you to familiarise yourself with the Associate PI Scheme, understand your role as the Local PI, and ensure your willingness to mentor them.

Upon application, the Associate PI Scheme team will assess their application and seek your approval as the Local PI to confirm your willingness to mentor the Associate PI. The decision of whether a prospective Associate PI is suitable to join the Scheme for your study rests with you.

If you approve an Associate PI, please confirm your decision promptly using the email sent by the Associate PI Scheme Team to avoid delaying an applicant's registration. If you do not approve, kindly inform the Associate PI Scheme team, and we will reject the application.

Funding for Associate PIs

There is no funding associated with the NIHR Associate PI Scheme. This is a development opportunity that prospective Associate PIs will have to undertake alongside performing their core role.

As part of their initial conversation with you about joining the Associate PI Scheme, you should discuss with them whether they feel they have the capacity to perform the Associate PI Scheme role and undertake all the elements of the Associate PI Scheme Checklist, alongside performing their core role.

Number of Associate PIs

The general rule is to allow 1 Associate PI per study, per site. Each independent site is eligible to have its own Associate PI. According to HRA guidelines, each independent operating site should have a PI, making them eligible to also have an Associate PI.

Within a single Trust, there might be more than one PI if hospitals/sites within the Trust independently contribute to a study. In such cases, each hospital/site having its own PI for the trial could accommodate an Associate PI at each of these hospitals/sites to collaborate with each PI.

If you are the PI for multiple studies, and each study is registered with the Associate PI scheme, you may have an Associate PI for each of those studies.

If approached by two prospective Associate PIs and you feel capable of mentoring both, we can allow 2 Associate PIs per study, per site. However, this decision should be based on your capacity as the Local PI to mentor more than 1 Associate PI.

You should advise both Associate PIs to apply and request them to email associatepisceme@nihr.ac.uk, indicating that you have agreed to mentor both of them.

If a site faces constraints with available PIs and receives multiple requests to mentor Associate PIs, additional steps can aid in making an informed decision. PIs should contemplate factors

such as the applicant's availability, their existing specialty interests, and how the Associate PI Scheme aligns with their clinical commitments.

Assessing the applicant's enthusiasm to assume the role is crucial. Have they invested time in exploring the study? What drives their interest in that particular study?

If you need more assistance or have further inquiries, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at associatepischeme@nihr.ac.uk. We're here to support you