

What is the Higher Specialist Scientist Training Programme?

Introduction: The Higher Specialist Scientist Training Programme (HSST) is a five-year blended academic and workplace training programme, developed by the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS), which is part of Health Education England (HEE), and the healthcare science community. The HSST programme provides opportunities for healthcare scientists to train to become eligible for available consultant healthcare scientist posts and is a great way to grow and develop your current consultant workforce. We develop, commission, support, and assess trainees on the programme. Trainees can either be recruited as new employees (direct entry) or from the existing workforce (in-service entry).

Expressions of Interest: The portal for expressions of interest for 2023/24 will be open between 1st July and 15th Sep 2022, and we encourage you to consider applying for HSST trainees to help support expansion, development, and leadership of healthcare science services as part of diagnostic recovery and growth. You can do this either as an individual organisation, or as part of a consortium, e.g., pathology network.

What life science specialisms is it available in?

The HSST is available in the following life science specialisms for 2023/24:

Analytical
Toxicology

Bionformatics
Genomics

Clinical & Laboratory
Transfusion

Clinical
Biochemistry

Clinical
Immunology

Genetics

Haematology
(Haemato-Oncology)

Haematology (Haemostasis &
Thrombosis)

Haematology
(Transfusion)

Histocompatibility &
Immunogenetics

Microbiology

Molecular Pathology of
Acquired Disease

Molecular Pathology
of Infection

Reproductive Science

Virology

What are the benefits of having an HSST trainee?

The HSST programme is a great way to grow your workforce and develop your current consultant workforce. HSST trainees will already be working in senior leadership positions, and the HSST programme will develop these skills further as well as provide the training to work as a Consultant Healthcare Scientist, leading and developing healthcare science services. HSST trainees will be service leaders, driving development of new research, technology, and practice, working within multi-professional clinical teams to deliver quality improvement, innovation, and world-class outcomes for patients. The HSST programme delivers both personal and professional development including leadership, management, teaching, as well as the values, attitudes, and behaviours appropriate for higher professional practice in the NHS. The HSST programme is entirely bespoke to the trainee and the department, based on local experiences, practices and service need.

What will be the responsibility of my department?

Each department is responsible for supporting the trainee through their training. The HSST may initially create additional work for trainees and the department - however, the benefits to the service of developing consultants and senior leaders in healthcare science, and the expertise and leadership that comes with this, will outweigh the challenges. The NSHCS welcomes network/consortia approaches to training, which can also reduce the onus on any one department.

How is training delivered?

Training is delivered in the workplace, with academic component delivered by universities across the UK. Manchester Academy for Healthcare Scientist Education (MAHSE) provides the Clinical Doctorate programmes in life sciences. In life sciences the Clinical Doctorate is optional but there is an additional requirement in these specialisms to complete the Fellowship examination of the Royal College of Pathologists. HSST trainees require 20% off the job study time in order to complete the academic components of the programme and workplace portfolio requirements.

How is the HSST funded?

The HSST is a partly funded training programme, with the academic components fully funded. The HSST does not include salary support, which needs to be provided by a host organisation/network. Trainees also benefit from a £13,000 training support allowance per year, which can be used to support training, development, examination, research, travel, and accommodation costs.

How is the HSST quality assured?

Accreditation: All departments hosting trainees must be accredited with the NSHCS. This is a straightforward process, and colleagues from the NSHCS are happy to advise and support you in achieving accreditation.

Recruitment: The HSST is a highly competitive programme with two routes, direct or in-service entry. Recruitment for in-service applicants is managed by the host organisation, whilst recruitment for direct entry applicants follows a national recruitment process. Interviews for both recruitment pathways are currently undertaken by local employers within host departments, and all aspects of recruitment must adhere to standardised entry criteria and guidance, all of which is managed by the NSHCS.

During and after training: Trainees and training officers are supported throughout the programme by the NSHCS. HSST trainees are invited to complete the annual national NETS training survey, with responses used to create action plans to improve the HSST programme.

What can a trainee do after completing the programme?

On completion of the programme, HSST graduates will be working at consultant level and will be eligible to register with the AHCS on the Higher Specialist Scientist Register (HSSR). Workforce planning to create appropriate roles for HSST graduates is essential.

How can I find out more?

For more information about HSST curricula and rotations, go to the [curriculum library](#)

For more information about commissioning, contact shakira.greaves@hee.nhs.uk

For more information about the HSST programme, contact the South East Healthcare Science Dean lisa.ayers@hee.nhs.uk

For more information about accreditation, contact the NSHCS at nshcs.accreditation@hee.nhs.uk