Modernising Scientific Careers
Training pathways

This factsheet summarises the training and development routes available to the healthcare science workforce and those under development within the Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC) programme.

Healthcare science assistant and associate (career levels 1 to 4)

Healthcare science assistants work towards vocational qualifications. Often apprenticeships are used as a training route. Healthcare science associates are commonly trained through a higher level apprenticeship, foundation degree or diploma.

Many organisations are familiar with developing their wider support workforce using these education routes and already have arrangements in place. Through MSC a national learning and development framework has been developed. Once implemented, the modular framework will provide a national learning structure for assistants and associates with vocational awards and qualifications. It is anticipated that the first tranche, approved by an awarding body, will be ready in March 2014.

Healthcare science practitioner (career level 5)

Healthcare science practitioners are now trained through NHS approved and accredited BSc honours degrees through the Practitioner Training Programme (PTP) in various themes of healthcare science.

Offered by a number of universities across England, the programmes include academic learning and workplace-based training. The 50+ week workplace-based training element, supported by competency-based learning guides, is spread over three years, involving broad scientific training in the first two years with an increasing focus on a chosen specialism during year three.

Clinical scientist (career level 6)

The Scientist Training Programme (STP) is a graduate-entry programme of work-based learning, underpinned by a university accredited master’s degree.

Trainees are employed by an NHS trust for the duration of the programme and will be required to spend time in a range of settings, before specialising in the last two years of the programme. The STP national recruitment process is managed by the National School of Healthcare Science and begins at the start of each calendar year, typically with an advertisement placed in New Scientist and jobs.ac.uk, and is supported by NHS Careers.

Consultant clinical scientist (career levels 8 and 9)

Higher Specialist Scientific Training (HSST) is a five-year workplace-based programme underpinned by a doctoral level academic award.

HSST will ensure future workforce supply of very senior clinical scientists in specialist areas through quality-assured programmes. The workplace-based education and training programme curricula have been developed in the initial specialisms, with the first HSST programmes expected to be in place in the Spring of 2014. Employers are working with their local training and education boards to identify workforce demand and capacity for programmes.

Accredited Scientific Practice (ASP) programmes

Underpinning the training routes for the healthcare science workforce is the development of structured career progression at every point within the career framework.

Accredited Scientific Practice (ASP) will have two aspects to it: academic learning and the assessment of workplace-based competencies. The workplace will be able to undertake further specialist training through ASP programmes as part of their employment, gaining specialist skills without the requirement to advance to the next level of the career framework. Project groups are being established to develop curricula, working with professional bodies to develop online assessment content and to formalise proposals.

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