



Barwon Health - Deakin University Clinician Scientist Pathway Guidelines for prospective candidates

'Clinician researchers bring both science and service to healthcare. They instil relevance in new discoveries and translate the findings to benefit patients. Their curiosity spawns innovation, and their critical thinking drives evidence-based practice. They are motivated by truth, and inspire the same in others. Because they know what works, safety and quality depend on them. Their impact is local and it is global - they make healthcare excellent today and ensure it will be better tomorrow.'

Professor Russell Gruen, Research Australia

What is the Clinician Scientist Pathway (CSP)?

Clinician scientists play a key role in generating and translating new knowledge. They improve health outcomes.

The CSP is a jointly funded four year Deakin University – Barwon Health (DU-BH) PhD scholarship program. It is designed to generate original research and drive uptake of evidence-based practice, new technologies and improved models of care. The allied health, nursing, midwifery and medical clinicians recruited to the CSP will be provided with job security, a supportive environment and improved career prospects following PhD completion.

The CSP aims to recruit and retain exceptional talent by enabling clinicians to:

- **maintain a clinical role while undertaking a PhD**, with protected time and supervision to progress multidisciplinary collaborations
- **complete clinical training**, working flexibly with their training body to meet requirements such as specific clinical competencies and rotations
- **access a period of structured planning** prior to PhD commencement
- **build a research track record and gather data to inform funding applications**, positioning the candidate for future funding success, clinical and research leadership and improved career prospects
- **build skills** across project management, priority-setting, implementation and translation
- **develop clinical and research leadership capability.**

CSP outcomes

CSP PhDs will directly inform and support strategic programs of clinical research addressing clearly defined, locally relevant and internationally significant goals that improve patient/consumer outcomes. There will be a cumulative benefit for patient care providing continuity, improved handover, mentoring at the senior trainee level, and emphasis on evidence-informed care.



CSP appointments will be competitive. CSP candidates will be ideally placed to establish their senior clinical/leadership role and an independent research program in the Barwon South West region and in turn create opportunities for subsequent generations of clinician PhD candidates. CSP benefits include:

- **recruitment and retention of high-quality clinicians** to allied health, nursing, midwifery and medical clinical roles and PhD programs with immediate workforce and patient care benefits
- **building of diversity and transdisciplinary capability** through an integrated CSP program for allied health, nursing, midwifery and medicine
- **improved continuity for early career clinicians** at the 'senior trainee' level, making an invaluable contribution to safety and quality
- **integration of research and clinical care**, which improves health service performance and consumer outcomes
- **crystallization of multidisciplinary collaborations** around the PhD student and their program
- **improved capacity to secure NHMRC and MRFF funding** by assembling the necessary feasibility data, multidisciplinary team and evidence of collaboration
- **increased output of high-quality papers and evidence of impact** in the clinical domain
- **improved capacity to influence health policy and practice** by designing and conducting research on relevant clinical, health systems, and/or health policy topic
- **achievement of key BH and DU objectives**, including BH *Research Strategic Plan (RSP)* and *Deakin 2030* objectives around growing research capability and impact.

CSP research alignment

CSP PhD research proposals must align closely with the priorities and needs of the applicant's clinical department and directorate and address a clear and well-articulated gap in current knowledge. This is intended to create day-to-day synergy between research and clinical service delivery. Proposals should also align with the stated objectives of the BH RSP and *Deakin 2030*.

In some cases, a PhD project will compare a novel therapy or approach and the best available version of current practice. Importantly, such comparisons not only drive innovation but also improve the delivery of evidence-informed standard care - thus, the impact on quality is immediate rather than contingent on the completion of the project. In other cases, the PhD will focus on implementing and translating existing evidence. Once again, this brings immediate and longer-term benefits to the BH clinical environment and supports the realisation of the *Deakin 2030* objectives.



Is a Graduate Certificate of Health and Medical Research (GCHMR) a CSP prerequisite?

Some CSP applicants will meet PhD entry requirements without completing the GCHMR. For high-potential clinicians with limited research experience seeking a CSP scholarship, the GCHMR provides appropriate training and credits to meet DU's PhD entry criteria (subject to grades). The GCHMR can be undertaken remotely and part-time during the 6-12 months leading up to PhD commencement. Importantly, it can include development work on the proposed PhD: [Graduate Certificate of Health and Medical Research | Deakin](#)

DU will consider cases for equivalence as required, including consideration of first author original research papers published in relevant journals. These cases can be considered before EOI submission to ensure that any requirements for completion of GCHMR prerequisites are understood before EOI submission.

GCHMR costs are up to \$14K, depending on the candidate's pre-existing research experience and how many units are required - some applicants may only need to complete 2 of the 4 units. These costs will be covered through a 50/50 co-contribution by BH-DU for successful applicants. Access to the CSP scholarship will be subject to satisfactory completion of the GCHMR requirements.

Candidates must undertake a DU PhD Xtra unit on research methods as part of CSP commencement.

How does the BH/DU co-contribution work?

- BH/DU will co-fund a \$45K/y PhD scholarship for 4 years through a yearly co-contribution of \$22,500K from each organisation
- the \$45K is a scholarship – payments will not attract on-costs or superannuation contributions
- DU will be the fund holder in fortnightly payments
- DU will waive PhD course fees
- The BH clinical role will be based on pre-existing or confirmed future employment with BH – an applicant's clinical unit is required to confirm the availability of a position up to but not exceeding 0.5 EFT for the duration of the applicant's CSP. The candidate may undertake out-of-hours or on-call work provided their progress is adequate. Where the applicant is a doctor in vocational training, confirmation is required that a BH clinical position up to but not exceeding 0.5 EFT will, subject to performance, be available to the applicant for the 4-year period; noting that this may include up to 12 months where the candidate undertakes a clinical role at another organisation as a component of their vocational training.



Who is eligible to apply?

CSP applicants must be:

- employed by BH or with an offer of BH employment
- an Australian citizen or permanent Australian resident
- registered to practice in Australia if subject to registration requirements under the *Health Practitioner Registration National Law* or eligible for professional association membership
- either a:
 - a doctor in a pre-vocational role at BH, in vocational training in any recognised specialty, or who has completed vocational training
 - a nurse or midwife working towards, or in, a senior clinical role or with suitable clinical experience and seeking to combine clinical practice and research leadership or
 - an allied health professional working towards, or in, a senior clinical role or with suitable clinical experience and seeking to combine clinical practice and research leadership
 - scientist or health professional working alongside clinicians in a BH Clinical Directorate to support safe and effective patient care

What is the CSP application process?

Applications will be considered by the CSP Review Committee (CSPRC) at least twice a year whilst funding is available. – Round 1 2025 EOIs closed on 28 February 2025 and round 2 closed 29 August 2025. A third round has now opened and will close on 14 November 2025.

The CSP applicant must submit the following documentation to support the application:

- **an EOI outlining:**
 - why the applicant wishes to undertake a CSP PhD
 - a summary of the research proposal including:
 - **proposal aims** - does the proposal address a clear and well-articulated gap in current knowledge, supported by a brief literature review?
 - **alignment** - is the proposal closely aligned with BH unit and clinical directorate needs and BH RSP and *Deakin 2030* objectives?
 - **design and planning** - does the proposal include a well-integrated and feasible plan with BH clinical services, resources required and available, budget and timeframes for completion?
 - **supervision team** - is the supervision team fit-for-purpose, with clinically embedded and academic supervisors whose expertise is well aligned with the proposal?
 - **governance and oversight** – does the proposal consider how ethical, governance, regulatory, legal requirements will be managed in accordance with BH and DU governance and oversight requirements?
 - **clinical and research leadership** – does the proposal describe how it will contribute to development of the applicant’s clinical and research leadership skills?



- where applicable, details of the applicant's vocational training program and relevant College training committee contacts or advanced practice training plans/clinical practice leadership
- where the candidate is required to complete the GCHMR or GCHMR units, their plan for how this will be completed ahead of CSP commencement
- **a curriculum vitae** describing research skills, training and projects undertaken and method of dissemination (eg publication, report, poster)
- **academic transcripts**
- **an academic reference** addressing the applicant's potential for successful CSP participation and PhD completion
- **a letter of support from the applicant's BH supervisor and Clinical Director** confirming:
 - the applicant is making satisfactory progress in clinical training (where relevant), support for training flexibility if appointed, and the applicant's potential for successful CSP PhD completion
 - for nursing, midwifery and allied health clinicians/practitioners, any current or planned advanced practice training and/or clinical leadership responsibilities and the applicant's potential for successful CSP PhD completion
 - that the proposal is considered feasible based on the aims, design, resources and timeframes and is aligned with unit and Directorate needs, the BH RSP and *Deakin 2030* objectives
 - availability of a clinical position of up to 0.5 EFT in-hours for the CSP duration; noting that the CSP does not place a limit on out-of-hours clinical work provided the candidate is making adequate progress
 - that for the CSP duration, the requirements of the applicant's position will not exceed 0.5 EFT
 - that for the CSP duration, the Department will ensure the candidate has 0.5 EFT in-hours protected time for their PhD (remunerated by the CSP scholarship)
 - whether an appropriately qualified and experienced BH primary supervisor, co-supervisor or advisor has been identified and has agreed to support the applicant
 - how the applicant will be supported to develop their clinical leadership and research leadership skills
- **a letter of support from the applicant's proposed DU or BH/DU primary supervisor and DU confirmation** that the candidate meets DU requirements for PhD candidature, or will meet those requirements subject to completion of GCMHR pre-requisites
- **a summary of any current or proposed employment arrangements in addition to BH employment.**

Attachment 1 provides a checklist to assist in preparation of the EOI submission. **Attachment 2** provides a flowchart summarising the key stages in the EOI process.



CSP selection criteria

- Applicant academic merit and suitability to undertake the proposed research (40%)
- Research proposal quality, strategic alignment and feasibility (30%)
- Evidence of research experience and engagement (relative to opportunity) through publications,* conference papers, funding applications (20%)
- Supervisory team experience and support and unit/Directorate commitment and support (10%)

[*Please note that research output such as reports and symposia presentations will be given consideration.]

The CSPRC will endorse selected EOIs to progress, subject to completion of any necessary GCHMR requirements. The DU Director of HDR Training, Faculty of Health will be a standing invitee to the CSPRC. CSPRC feedback will be provided to applicants whose EOIs are not supported. The applicant will be required to complete any necessary DU documentation in accordance with its HDR access policies and procedures. Where CSPRC support to progress is subject to completion of GCHMR units, these must be satisfactorily completed prior to CSP commencement.

Noting the alternate GCHMR pathway above, DU requires that in order to be considered for selection into a doctoral degree, applicants are required to have completed either:

- a research project in a related area including a thesis which is equivalent to at least 25% of a year's full-time study at Level 8 or 9 of the Australian Qualifications Framework with achievement of a grade for the project equivalent to a DU grade of 70% or equivalent
- a masters or honours degree (research) in a related area
<https://www.deakin.edu.au/research/research-degrees-and-PhD/research-degree-entry-pathways>

DU will consider cases for equivalence as required, including consideration of first author original research papers published in relevant journals. These cases can be considered ahead of EOI submission to ensure that any requirements for completion of GCHMR pre-requisites are understood prior to EOI submission.

Applicants are encouraged to submit funding applications during the CSP, with mentoring and support from BH-DU.

PhD commencement

Subject to satisfactory completion of all pre-CSP requirements, candidates will commence on the CSP with team-based supervision arrangements.



Question	Response
CSP process	
<p>What is the process for CSP selection?</p>	<p>EOI submission as per the above requirements and review by the BH Clinician Scientist Pathway Review Committee (CSPRC). The DU Director of HDR Training, Faculty of Health will be a standing invitee to the CSPRC. The CSPRC will shortlist EOIs and interview shortlisted candidates.</p> <p>Prior to submission of the EOI, DU will consider any equivalence considerations and advise on whether or not GCHMR units are required to be completed in order to commence on the CSP. The CSPRC will confirm these requirements as part of its EOI consideration and determination.</p> <p>Where the EOI is supported to proceed, the supporting documentation will be provided to DU. DU acceptance for PhD candidature will be undertaken in accordance with current DU procedures and protocols, subject to completion of any GCHMR requirements.</p> <p>PhD commencement: Subject to satisfactory completion of pre-CSP requirements, candidates will commence on the CSP with team-based DU-BH co-supervision. Ethics requirements are required to be completed within the first three months of PhD commencement.</p>
CSP process	
<p>How is the Clinician Scientist Pathway Review Committee (CSPRC) constituted?</p>	<p>CSPRC members have clinical backgrounds in medicine, nursing, midwifery and allied health, together with doctoral qualifications or extensive experience in research delivery and leadership. A representative of the applicant’s clinical directorate will be part of the interview panel and will be available to debrief with the applicant following the interview process.</p> <p>The CSPRC will report on its activities to the BH Research Advisory Committee.</p>



Question	Response
When can EOIs be submitted?	EOIs are required to be submitted to the CSPRC via the Research Directorate by dates advertised in the BH Research Newsletter. EOIs will be considered at the next CSPRC meeting, subject to all necessary information being included in the EOI. The CSPRC will aim to respond to EOIs within 6 weeks of the submission date.
If an EOI is not supported, will feedback be given to the applicant?	Yes – EOI feedback will be provided to applicants where the EOI is not supported to proceed.
Can a clinician who has already commenced a DU PhD apply for the CSP?	Candidates who have already commenced a PhD can only be considered for the CSP in the pre-confirmation stage.
How are the CSP places to be allocated across medicine, nursing, midwifery and allied health?	Candidates across medicine, nursing, midwifery and allied health will be selected following CSPRC consideration of the EOI against the selection criteria outlined above, fulfilment of all EOI requirements and strategic alignment with BH RSP and <i>Deakin 2030</i> objectives.
For medical applicants, how will negotiations be undertaken with the relevant college?	Negotiations will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis with the relevant College by BH Clinical Director of Research in consultation with the Clinical Director of the auspicing Directorate and relevant BH College fellows.
Can the clinical role provided by the CSP candidate’s department be less than? 0.5 EFT	Yes, provided that the clinical role is sufficient to maintain the candidate’s clinical skills and development, and that they are genuinely embedded in the Department’s clinical functions.
Deakin review and approval	
What happens when an EOI is supported by the CSPRC to proceed?	Where the EOI is supported by the CSPRC, supporting documentation will be provided to DU. DU acceptance for PhD candidature will be undertaken in accordance with current DU procedures and protocols, subject to any CSPRC requirements in relation to completion of GCHMR requirements.
PhD candidature	
Can the CSP PhD be undertaken part-time?	Candidates will be enrolled by DU as a part-time PhD candidate. Scholarship funding will not extend beyond four years on the CSP program.



Question	Response
CSP funding and recipient payments	
What are the pre-conditions for CSP scholarship payments?	Written confirmation of satisfactory progress from co-supervisors (annual review) and successful completion of DU milestones.
When will CSP scholarship payments be allocated?	Scholarship payments will be made by DU on a fortnightly basis for the duration of the four year scholarship.
Which organisation will hold and distribute the funds?	DU will hold and distribute scholarship funds. BH will transfer funds to DU to facilitate CSP payments.
Can funding be extended beyond year 4 if the PhD is not completed?	No. There is no capacity for further funding beyond the four year scholarship.
Is tax payable on CSP scholarship payments?	Yes.
Supervision	
Can co-supervision be undertaken by a BH clinician if that clinician does not hold a PhD?	It is preferred that BH co-supervisors have a PhD, however this will not preclude co-supervision if the arrangement is approved by DU and the BH supervisor is entered into the DU supervisor system. The DU supervisor will hold doctoral qualifications.
How will CSP PhD candidates be guaranteed protected time to undertake their PhD? How can we ensure there won't be clinical seepage or pressure to undertake clinical work during the PhD allocation?	Clinical units are required to confirm that the candidate will be provided with 0.5 EFT in-hours protected time for their PhD studies (remunerated by the CSP scholarship) for the 4 years of the CSP.
How will BH and DU support CSP PhD candidates to ensure they can complete within the 4 year period?	A community of practice will be established for CSP PhD candidates, auspiced by the Research Directorate. A BH representative will engage in the DU annual review process. Consideration will be given to how a member of each CSP supervising team can provide mentorship to another CSP candidate. Supervisors should feed back to the CSPRC or Director/Co-Director of Research if they have concerns about support for a candidate's protected time.

Attachment 1: Clinician Scientist Pathway - Self Assessment checklist for EOI

[You can use this checklist to identify where there may be gaps that will need addressing to complete your EOI. This information will also provide a basis for discussions with your department and those supporting you with your EOI]

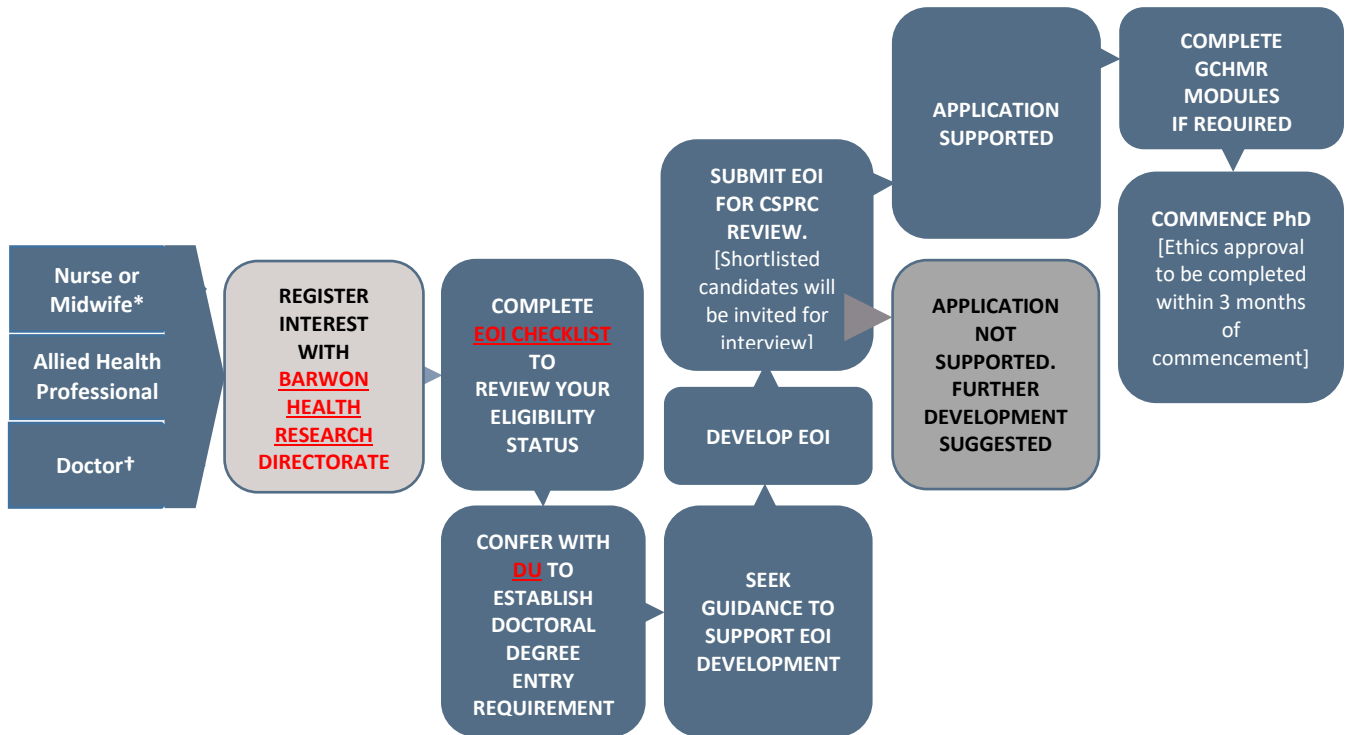
Question	YES	NO	Actions
Do you have a research proposal that addresses a clear and well-articulated gap, supported by a brief literature review?			
Are you able to outline aims, design, proposed resources, budget and timeframes, including a well-integrated and feasible plan that also addresses all necessary ethical, governance, regulatory, legal requirements?			
Can you articulate how your proposal aligns closely with the BH unit and clinical directorate needs, BH RSP and <i>Deakin 2030</i> objectives and how it will contribute to developing your clinical and research leadership skills?			
Do you have knowledge and understanding of ethical and governance procedures at BH?			
Are your current training and leadership commitments commensurate with undertaking the CSP?			
Do you have any current research experience?			
Have you undertaken any research-related training?			
Have you been involved in any research dissemination activities? (e.g. publication; poster; report)			
Do you have any experience of applying for research funding?			
Do you have an academic referee who can comment on your capacity to undertake the CSP?			
Have you discussed your plans with your clinical lead?			
Are your department supportive of your plans?			
Do you have a supervisor in mind who is based at BH and whose expertise is well aligned with the proposal?			
Do you have a supervisor in mind who is based at DU and whose expertise is well aligned with the proposal?			



Do you have access to your academic transcripts?			
Have you sought advice from key individuals who will support you through the EOI process?			

Establishing Deakin University (DU) Doctoral Degree entry requirements. [You will need this information for your discussions with DU to appraise the need to undertake Graduate Certificate of Health and Medical Research (GCHMR) modules NB – Peer-reviewed publications may be given consideration in discussions but do not stand alone as an exemption against other criteria]			
Question	YES	NO	Unsure/actions
Do you have a Masters degree (Research) or Honours degree in a related area?			
Do you have evidence of a completed research project, including a thesis, which is equivalent to at least 25% of a year’s full-time study at level 8 or 9 of the Australian Qualifications Framework with achievement of a grade for the project equivalent to a Deakin grade of 70% or equivalent?			
Do you have peer-reviewed publication(s) related to previous research?			

Attachment 2: Clinician Scientist Pathway flowchart



All applicants must be employed by BH; *working towards, or in, a senior clinical role and seeking to combine clinical practice and research leadership; †undertaking, or commencing, vocational training in any recognised specialty; DU=Deakin University; GCHMR=Graduate Certificate of Health and Medical Research; CSPRC=Clinician Scientist Review Committee